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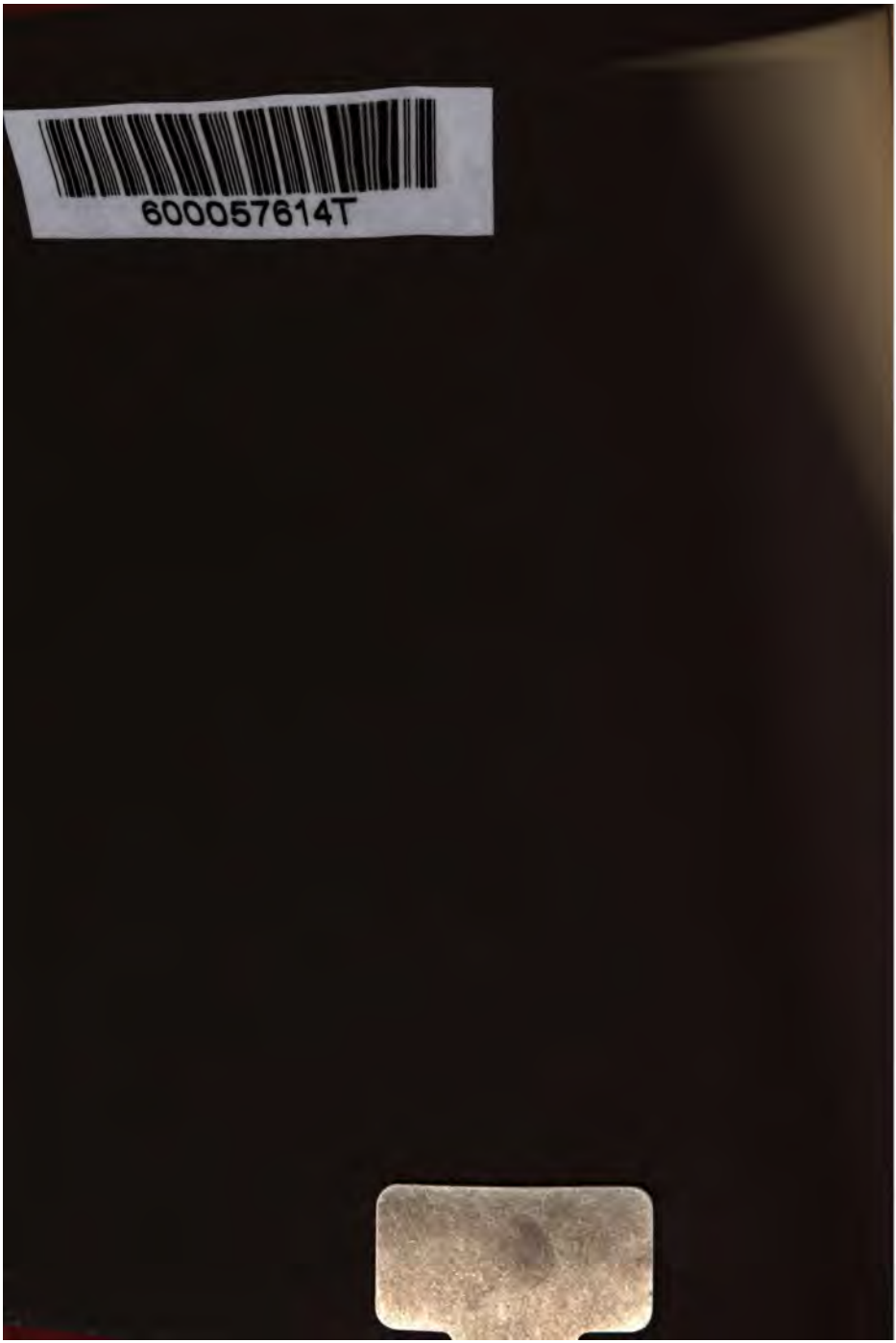
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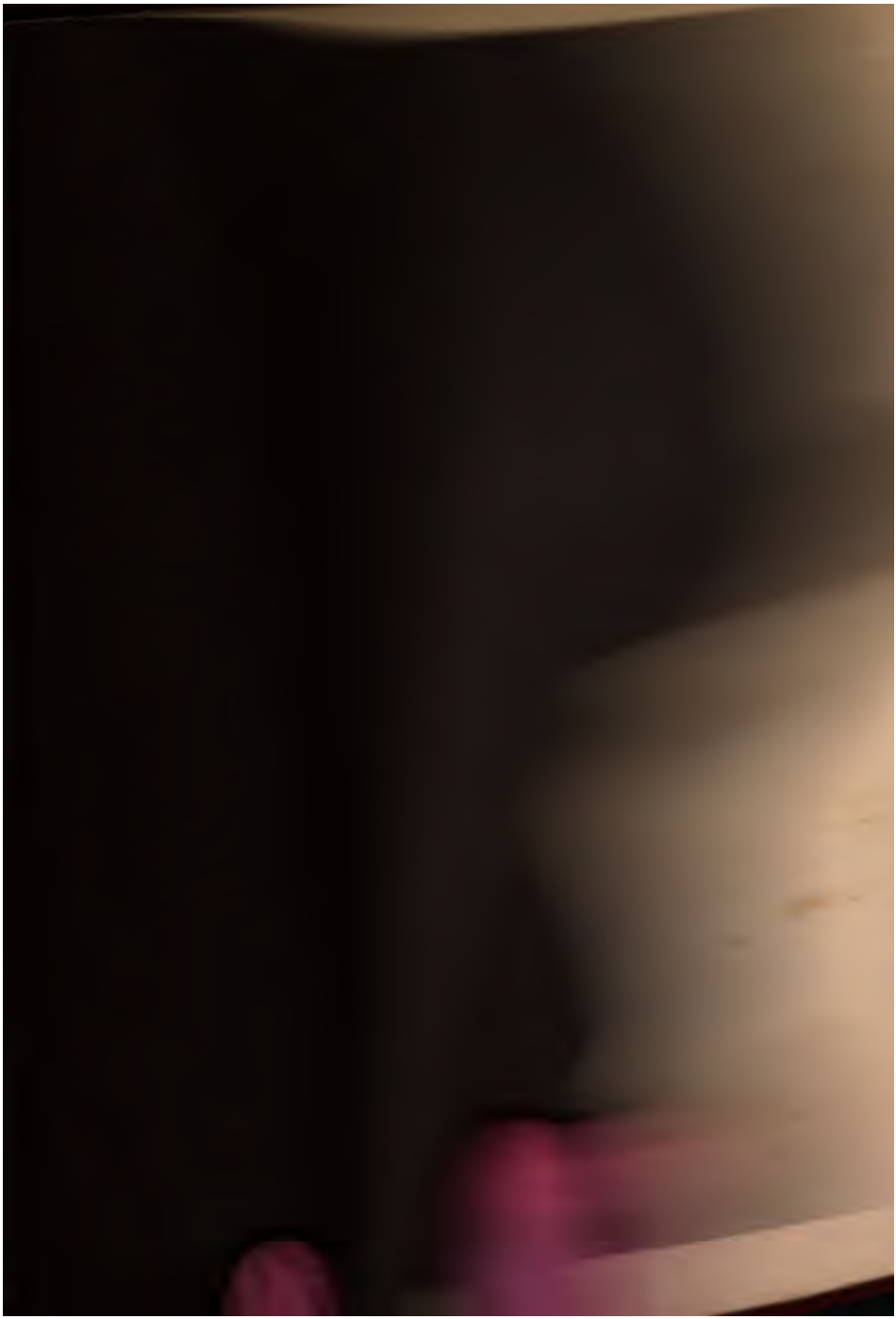
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JOAN THE MAID.

I.

Percival's Story.

A WITCH! Joan the Maid a witch! No more a witch than St. Catharine and all the blessed saints who talked with her as with a fellow-citizen of the Golden City, whither men sent her long ago.

Deluded! No more deluded than all the goodly fellowship of the martyrs who were counted mad by the deluded earth-seekers of their own day.

I have seen her flashing, like Michael the Archangel, in her white array, before Orleans. I have seen her shed tears when she was wounded, like any other tender girl, yet through all the pain lead the army on. Some of us have seen her weep over the English wounded, and sustain the dying in her arms. Afterwards, betrayed and delivered to her enemies, I have seen her

shrink from suffering, and yet vanquish torture, succouring and saving others even in the flames.

And I am as sure she was sent of God as that I breathe. Sent to rescue torn and bleeding France, sent to turn our England back from pillage and rapine, from the false quest she was on, to her true work and warfare among the nations.

I am as certain as that the sun is in the heavens that she was given to these poor bewildered, barren days of ours, to be to us as an image of the Christ; King, Deliverer, Sufferer, Saviour of men; Saviour, not of England or of France, but of all men; to lift up before us once more the likeness of what He was and is, who gave not His substance only, but Himself for us; the likeness of what each of us in high or humble place is called to be.

Is it strange that I call this warrior-maiden a likeness of Christ, of Him who would neither strive nor cry, who said, "Agenstonde not an evil man, but if ony man smyte thee on the ryte cheek, turn to him the tother; to hym that will strive with thee in doom, and take away thi coote, leve thou to hym also thi mantle"?

Yet, I say it with full purpose, from the depths of my soul. The longer I live, the more I learn that there is but one likeness of the Christ in human hearts; the love to God and man which leads us to lay down life for the brethren, for the world.

Jeanne the Maid laid down her life for her land in living, and laid it down in dying. And it is this, in

mother, maid, monk, father, priest, or king, which is like the King—her King and ours.

Not enjoyment of His blessed sacraments, not raptures of prayer; these may be little more than the body's delight in its dainties, in a fresh air on the cheek, or a sweet smell in the gardens; but love, the life which lives in others, and if death comes in such service, takes it as naturally and unhesitatingly as any other step of the Way of the Cross; this is the true imitation of Christ, this is the Christ Himself living in men.

It is good to go over again the story of the Maid, the glorious, sorrowful, sacred story, as it was interwoven with my own, and as I searched it out from friend and foe.

I go back to the old days, the childhood by the Western sea, the sea whose shore no man knows, nor even if it has a shore.

The salt of its spray seems on my old withered cheeks as I speak, the sound of its waves is in my ears, waves that begin no one knows where, and break on the white shingles and the pitiless rocks like an echo of eternity.

It was no friendly lapping water to be played with, that sea by the old seat of Arthur the King, along the thundering shores of Tintagel.

Death was in it, and peril and power to destroy lurked in every one of those breakers which dashed like war-horses against the rocks, or leaped like reined-in chargers on the sands.

We knew it even when we bathed in them as boys, my brother Owen and I.

They seethed up through bottomless holes to the top of the wild cliffs, they sent their spray miles inland; and the winds that lashed and enraged them levelled the tops of the mighty oaks as even as a meadow of cropped grass.

As a battle-field sea and land seemed to me then; as a battle-field life has been to me.

And I had liever it were so, though I may be twisted and gnarled and cropped like those aged wrestling oaks, than grow up smooth and even in some inland valley of the world.

For the fighting has to be done by some one, and I had liever it should be by me for all I can, than for me by any.

The stirring of the blood in the battles is better than any joys of sloth. And in all the battles of the Christ some evil ones are slain, and some oppressed ones of the devil are rescued and set free.

Not by blowing trumpets, in these days, and marching round walls ever so many times do the strongholds of the enemy fall, within or without, but by blows and wounds, and shedding of life-blood.

Wherefore it is good, I deem, to begin the training early, for none can win the field for another, alas! nor can any lose the battle for us but ourselves.

Alas, yes alas! for all do not win; and it is hard to stand by and see the day lost by those we would give

life to make conquerors, and to know why they lose, and even to tell them how to win, and yet be able to succour them no whit, save in some poor feminine after-work of binding up wounds; and often not even that.

Yes, harder than anything in the world.

Does the Lord Christ know how hard?

Ah, indeed! does He not? He who said in words which weep through the ages, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I, and thou wouldst not!"

Yet, in that old stronghold of ours, of the Trevelyans by the Western sea, rugged outside as the rocks it seemed part of, there was for a while a warm nest tapestried as with down from a mother-bird's wing.

It is good to think that the rudest stronghold that bristles defiance from its heights, and the poorest cabin that crouches defenceless below, have all been that to some little human creatures in their day, a fortress, and a nest.

The tiniest wren's wings seem a mighty shield to her nestlings: the fiercest lioness's roar is as a tender cooing to her whelps.

And in our old castle by the sea we had lion-hearted courage to defend us, and wings as soft as any dove's to nestle under, we three; I Percival the eldest, Owen the second, and our little sister Elaine.

Our mother was French, and our father won her on this wise.

In the early days of this century no English coast was safe. The French landed at Falmouth, and at

Haverford-West in Wales, summoned to his aid by the Welsh Prince, Owen Glendower. The Flemings and Easterlings were ever cruising round our shores, and pouncing on some undefended village or town. And we were not behind-hand in reprisals, we to whom the sea was no accident, but the very element and safeguard of our existence. Sometimes we had letters of marque from the king. Sometimes we had none, and did as well without.

Close to our castle was a little harbour, approached by a winding creek, between precipitous rocks. Once reached, this creek was secure from all winds; but woe worth the hapless foreigner who thought to penetrate it unpiloted. This little fishing-port, bristling to our foes with fortifications such as no human hands could rear, determined in a measure the character of our family history.

It was the only harbour along all that range of rugged coast which breasts the sea without a shore. Without, absolutely inaccessible, and, indeed, invisible to any stranger; within, land-locked as a natural dock and basin. Beyond it stretched a curve of wild rocky coast and if any hapless vessel were seen in certain winds within the arc of that curve, within a line which was as the string to that fatal bow, every man and woman on the land knew she was hopelessly doomed; the wreckers made ready for their prey, and pious souls began their prayers, as for souls already in purgatory.

The protection of this haven made our forefathers

masters of two elements. The elder sons lords of the little wooded valley, the miles of mountain pasture, and the few fields of thin corn, sprinkled with peasants' huts; the younger ploughing the sea, and reaping their harvests in other men's sowing, finding the salt waters themselves no barren waste, and oftentimes making raids on our neighbours' coasts.

In one of these expeditions our father, combining with some larger craft from Falmouth (then smarting from a recent plundering expedition equipped by the Duke of Orleans), descended on the shores of Brittany, and sacked and burned the little town on the coast where my mother dwelt.

My father came up to the threshold of her house just as an old man fell down on it, slain by the men-at-arms and sailors from his own ship. They rushed into the house to plunder. It was a fair house. To us, from our mother's descriptions, it stood as an image of all the princely dwellings in the Round Table histories, which were the romances of our childhood, or of the palaces in the tales of Chaucer.

There were carven chests and tables and chairs, and Venice glasses, and tapestries and embroideries, and goodly furnishings and paintings; different, indeed, from the bare stone walls and rude benches and boards of our castle.

But tapestries and carvings were little to our seamen; they wanted silver and gold and jewels, and such obvious treasures as can be carried away swiftly in small vessels from a burned and ruined town.

Through room after room they hurried, seeking the owners, who might tell them where their treasures were hidden, or buy their lives off with a ransom. But room after room was empty, until, in a closet in a small tower, inside the great bed-chamber, they found a young maid alone, clad in broidered silk and samite, my father said, like Queen Guinevere, and kneeling before a great wooden crucifix as large as life, cunningly carved in wood, with the arms stretched wide to embrace the world, and the head bowed, not so much as if in weakness as if majestically yielding up the ghost to God for man.

She was kneeling there. She did not rise when they burst open the door, but drew close to the crucifix and clasped the nailed feet in her arms, appealing with her eyes, not to the soldiers, but to the Love imaged there.

The men drew back, and some crossed themselves. The image was sacred to them as to her. And some of them doubtless had in their hearts some memory which made the hapless suppliant maid sacred to them, at least for the moment, as if she had been the Blessed Maiden Mother herself.

My father was a knight sworn to defend women and children; and she, in her orphaned youth, was both. His purpose was formed, according to his wont, in a moment. Turning to his men he said,—

"You know me; you can trust me. I claim this house, and all in it, as my share of the booty. I will arrange the ransom, and see that each of you has his share. Go ye elsewhere, and take what booty ye can.

Lose no more time here, for whatever time ye spend here is lost. Ye know well none of you ever fell short of his due by trusting me. And," he added, with a flash of the eyes his men knew, "none ever lost his due for disobeying me."

One or two of the seamen, new men, hired from Falmouth, made a little demur. But the old men-at-arms, retainers among our own tenantry, and the fishermen from our port, who formed the majority of the little crew, made no hesitation.

And as they turned away my father added,—

"I choose to defend this maiden by my knightly duty as my own sister."

Whereon Peter the Wright, who told us, cried,—

"What our lord defends, we defend!"

And with a ringing Cornish cheer which blanched our mother's cheek, the marauding party made off, leaving my father alone with the maiden.

Then, as he often told us, the most difficult part of his task began. For, alone with her, a sudden abashment and awe came over him, and his French, moreover, not being fluent, he knew not what to say. Besides, the thought of the old man he believed to be her father lying dead on the threshold struck him dumb.

At length, after a few moments' pause, he knelt down before the crucifix and crossed himself, and said,—

"Fair dame, thou art in sanctuary here. Is there any refuge to which I could take thee? By St. Mary, I will do it at the peril of my life. Hast thou kindred at

hand?" For he still thought the blood of the slain lay for ever as a great gulf, never to be bridged over, between her and him.

She rose, and casting down her eyes, said, in a tone of hopeless resignation,—

"I have no kindred. I have been fatherless and motherless from childhood. My uncle rode off from the house this morning, when your ships appeared in the offing, to get succour."

"Who was it then whom our men slew at your door?"

"It must have been the Sieur Trisserot, my uncle's partner. He wanted me to fly with him, and I chose rather to remain here and die, if so it pleased the saints."

"The Sieur Trisserot was not thy friend, then?" said my father, infinitely relieved, and venturing to raise his eyes to the maiden's face.

"My uncle would have had me be his betrothed," she said frankly, "and I willed it not."

"Then, perchance, thou art vowed to a more sacred bridal?" he replied.

"I have vowed nothing," she replied, the pallid hue natural to her slightly changing. "Father Gregory said it was not a vocation to the religious life to hate any one man as, Heaven forgive me, I hated the Sieur Trisserot."

"Thou wouldst not, then, that I took thee to a convent?"

"There is none near," she said. "Take me rather to good Mother Margot's, in the street by the church."

"The street by the church is in flames," he said.

At that moment a tumult of rough voices reached them; rough and uncertain voices, as in drunken revel. Unconsciously she crept nearer him for protection. There was no time for hesitation.

"Maiden," he said, "we know nothing of each other but our voices and our faces; but I would trust thine to the end of the world. If thou canst trust me, I will seek the priest who is with our ships, and we will be wed. So only can I have right and might to guard thee. And if on reaching our coast thou willest otherwise, I swear by St. Mary thou shalt have refuge and welcome in the fairest nunnery I can find in England or France."

She did not refuse; and in that wild way our father won his bride, as true and gentle a lady as any who ever trod the halls of Camelot or Tintagel when the Round Table was at its best.

There was little time to spare.

The wedding-mass was hastily said.

Our mother scrupulously refused to carry off any of her uncle's property. The men-at-arms, therefore, made free with whatever costly stuffs and silver equipage they could find; but to our share came only the few jewels she wore, the wooden crucifix at the foot of which she had knelt, and an Italian picture of the Holy Family by a Florentine painter whom our mother used to call the Angelical Brother, of colour delicate and dainty as young leaves and flowers in spring, and with faces innocent and

glad as those which shine on happy children in their dreams.

And these remained the great teachers and treasures of our childhood.

Whatever they might have been among the rich marbles and mosaics of crowded Italian churches, they were more, I think, on the bare walls of our rude old Cornish castle, binding three young souls to the sacred facts of the gospel story, and letting in on them the day-spring of beauty which had dawned on the sunny south.

Our old stronghold must have seemed little better than a robber's den to our mother.

Carpet and tapestry were unknown in it when she came. Silk and samite there were none, save in the drapery of the old oaken state bed which our grandmother had brought at her bridal; and of fine linen there was little, save such as had been stored in our grandmother's great wedding chest, the finest whereof soon went into small garments to wrap her first-born in, me, Percival Trevelyan, the eldest of her three children.

But our mother had little liking for luxury, and withal a love of all beauty, which made every sunbeam a jewel for her, and every wild flower or sea-shell precious as a broidered tapestry or chased chalice. Is it the glamour of an old man's memory, or was it the actual world she created by her presence? I always think of the rooms in which she dwelt as enriched with purple and broidered work, and fragrant with fresh flower scents; and of every

ramble with her on cliff or beach as if it had been shone on by the sun of the south.

She had doubtless a fine skill with her needle, which she taught to our little sister Elaine; and, in her hands, unbleached linen, or flannel woven from the wool of our own sheep, and broidered with such dyes as we could make, seemed, to our eyes, to drape the walls and windows as with creamy velvets.

Till I die, the picture of the chamber which was her own, with the crimson draperies of our grandmother's bed, and the broidered hangings by door and window; the logs blazing on the hearth, and reflected on the oaken floor she taught the maids to polish; the sheep-skin and wolf-skin mats strewed here and there; and in the deep recess of the window the solemn crucifix and the tender painting of "The Mother and the Child," will always be to me a heart's nest of rest and warmth, furry and feathery, and warm and soft, just as I suppose down, and plumelets, and tufts of dry grass, and bits of straw seem to other nestlings.

She was indeed a song-bird and a nest-builder, her lissom fingers always busy working out some plan of her loving heart and active brain.

There, as we sate on the wolf-skin at her feet, she embroidered, and span, and sang French lays, or lisped any English song she had caught from our people, interrupting song and work now and then to lavish caresses on one or another of us; or, later, to inspect and help the mimic tasks we set ourselves in imitation of hers.

And morning, noon, and evening there were the prayers beside the crucifix and the Holy Family.

These were the measure and picture of divine love she gave us: Almighty Power becoming as a child to be near the little ones; Divine life bowing to death to succour the suffering and to save the dying; these—and *herself*, the Divine Image in the Tabernacle not made with hands, enshrined in the mother's heart; love and authority, Divine right to rule, authority only felt when we rebelled or strayed, and then only felt as a power driving back to love. For she could be stern; the heart of the ruler was in her. There was a dignity in that gentle presence which guarded court within court of her being from any intrusion.

When she was present at any revel in the hall, the voices grew softer, and everywhere under her gentle sway, joyous and childlike as she was, and little bent on ruling, order came and diligence and thankfulness; and sloth and sadness fled away.

Moreover, dear as order and beauty were to her, the highest order and beauty were dearest. I mean goodness and justice; and I well remember how this was stamped on our hearts by something that happened one winter evening.

The winds had been very wild for days, and my father had been much away, when one evening he came up the stone steps leading to my mother's room, with the tramp of many feet behind him. Coming up to her and kissing her, he said,—

"I bring thee fair feathers, my lady, to line thy nest." And the men who followed brought in a cedarn chest, carved and inlaid with other foreign woods, and laid it before her and left.

One beautiful robe after another of rich Oriental stuffs my father drew out of it, and unrolled before her, and at the bottom a gorgeous Arabian carpet, which he unfolded with fond pride before her feet.

"My lady's dainty feet will have something at last worthy for them to tread on," he said.

But she, instead of welcoming his gifts, hid her face in her hands and burst into tears.

"Beloved," she sobbed, "these are bridal dresses, and where is the bride?"

"How can I tell?" he said; "the ship was dashed to pieces before we saw it. They say she was from France, but none of the crew or passengers have been found; only this chest dashed and jammed into a cranny of the rocks. We scaled them and saved it for thee, at some toil and peril of more lives than one."

She laid her head on his breast, still weeping.

"Forgive me," she said, "but how could I forget the poor face that smiled from these splendours last? She may have kindred, mother, husband, weeping for her. Let us find them, beloved, and send it all to them. It does not belong to us."

For reply, he took the rejected robe in his arms, squeezed it passionately together, went to the oratory window by the crucifix, opened it, and threw it into the

foaming caldron which seethed up against the perpendicular rocks beneath.

"It was won for thee at peril of lives nearer to thee than this poor young Frenchwoman," he said; "but it matters not, let it go to those to whom it belongs."

And he strode out of the room, leaving her weeping, and us children sore amazed and dismayed.

He did not reappear for many hours, and when he came back it was dusk; but all the anger had gone out of his voice, as he went up to her, bent fondly over her and laid her hand on his cheek.

"Dear," he said, "I bring thee another kind of offering to-night."

And there was a mingled sorrow and tenderness in the broken tones of his deep voice which echoes in my ear to-day.

"Come down," he said; "they are laid in the chapel before the altar. There is nothing to shock thee."

"They?" she said.

"They; the bodies of the mother and the babe," he could trust his voice to no more. And so we went down to the castle chapel, our father carrying Elaine on one arm, and leading my mother with the other hand, while Owen and I crept on awe-stricken behind.

And as we went he murmured in a hoarse voice—

"We found them lying quite peacefully on the white sands in a nook of the rocks, the babe clasped in the mother's arms."

And there they lay, still, on the bier before the altar,

with a white drapery shrouding the limbs, locked in an embrace stronger than death.

"Give them rest, give them rest," wailed from the aged priest's voice, in the Requiem Mass. As to the body, it had been given.

Indeed, the wild waves seemed to have borne them to that resting-place, where they were found, to all seeming, unhurt, like some delicate unbroken shell, unwounded and unmarred; only dead.

We never forgot it, any of us.

And afterwards a change came over my father as to wrecks.

Before, he, and we too, had shared the common feeling of the coast, taking them as "God-sends," committing the poor souls indeed Christianly to God, but heeding little the poor bodies; reaping as a sea-harvest the treasures they had been snatched from by the wild sea, which was to us as a defensive army and a fisher of treasure.

But from that time, it seemed stamped indelibly on his heart that the human creatures were worth unspeakably more than the treasures.

And when a ship in danger loomed on us within the fatal string of our rocky bow, he never failed to call all his men together to save perishing lives, let the goods be rescued or not.

Henceforth, moreover, though he distributed a portion of the wrecked goods among his men as a reward for the toil and danger they encountered, his own portion he

never more touched, but gave it to the nearest religious house, to make provision for the shipwrecked.

Such reaping was there from the sowing of our mother's tears.

Yet happy as she seemed, and was, I suppose the rough life and climate told on her more delicate nature. For, after that, I remember less and less her sharing our rambles and plays, partly perhaps because they became more boyish, and it was a pride to Owen and me to go with the fishermen and huntsmen where the women could not follow. I remember her more at home in her own room, not so much as a voice and a power, but as a kind of silent presence of sunshine, a smile welcoming, a love embracing us. I think she must have ceased to sing, for the warbling of French lays and English ballads dies away unexplained from my recollection. Yet fragments of story float back to me on the tide of that far-off sea; legends of the Round Table, and more especially of the Quest of the Sangreal.

I remember a dim splendour as of a far-off opened heaven, and the Sacred Chalice floating down to mortal men, life-blood of agony and wine of joy, seen only by the pure, or if seen by the impure, seen but as fire piercing to the bones and marrow with keen, purifying anguish; of the Round Table with all its inspiriting adventures, its rescues of the oppressed, its joyous triumphings, and jousts, and feasts, scattered for this mysterious Quest, the knights wandering hither and thither, and all the noble company smitten once more

apart, each on his separate way, all seeking and so few finding, and the king broken-hearted, and the kingdom broken.

And yet through all the ruin, glimpses of a deeper love and a higher life, and a wonderful shining through of the sacred name of Jesus, like a key-note to which all the discords had to come at last.

The sister of Sir Percival giving the life-blood from her arm to rescue the dying lady; her fair corpse floating alone to its burial on the solitary sea; Sir Lancelot led into that mysterious ship, and sailing with the dead maiden to the wondrous castle; Galahad entering the heavenly land as calmly as he had entered the hall of the knights.

Strangely that Quest of the Sangreal is mingled with the last months of our mother's life.

Seas which were familiar to us as our own, yet bordered by lands no mortal feet have trodden; lands whose names were household words, suddenly opening straight on heaven; chambers which angels entered, and no one was surprised; stories with no beginning breaking off unfinished; death and life mystically intermingled, with unnamable horror and unspeakable joy, as they were in that death-chamber of my mother's, which had been such a warm, furry, feathery nest to us.

For she was fading from us slowly, surely; the body vanquishing the spirit, silencing its utterance, and narrowing its outward working day by day; the body vanquished by the spirit, which shone clearer and clearer

through. She was passing from us, the spirit of order and love and beauty of our home; and everything seemed breaking up with her.

Our father refused to see danger, and Owen was like him, and never would see what he did not wish to see. They went more eagerly than ever to the chase and the fishing, and when they came home the story of their adventures stirred our mother's heart and coloured her cheek for the time, and they deemed her recovering, and went forth again to the sea and the forest, and smiled at the croakings of those who stayed at home.

But I could not leave. There must be some stationary creature to be leant upon in trouble, and in this trouble it happened to be me.

My mother in her sure vision of the coming sorrow, our little sister in her horror of childish ignorance of life and death, both needed me, and looked for me. To me alone our mother would often speak of the things she dreaded in the life around—the wild revels, the reckless adventure; yet her joyous spirit seldom failed. She made a bright place of her sick-room; and many a gay moment we had by her bedside, we three, over the cooking and nursing she taught us.

Until the night came when I was lying on my little bed in a corner awake, while Elaine was asleep, and suddenly the dear familiar voice came to me with a tone that seemed new, and strange, and solemn, and sent a shudder through me.

"Come near," she said, "quite near."

And I rose and crept near.

It was a wild night. The spray dashed against the window, the wind howled through the clefts of the rocks, and the waves dashed against the foundations of the castle. And there was a sound like the pecking of a bird's beak against the pane, which had a terror for us because some one had told us it was a call for a soul to come home. But somehow the terror seemed gone out of all these things for me. The terror was so much more terrible in the change in that dear familiar voice. It seemed far off, like a voice from the higher air, belonging to us and our world no more.

"My darling," she said, "I am going home. Take care of them all! take care of them all for me!"

And then came a violent fit of coughing, and our foster-mother came in from the next chamber, and I was sent for Father Adam, and there were terror and hurry around her; all the household rushing together to join in the last prayers, and be present at the last sacred rites.

Terror and tempest within and without: winds and waves howling wildly outside, battering the walls and rattling the windows; within, voices hushed to whispers more fearful than any shrieks. But she, meanwhile, lay quiet; with a depth of prayer and peace in her eyes, as they turned from us towards heaven, with our father's name sighing on her lips, and then clear and full the name of "Jesus," as I never heard it again until it rose from the lips of the Maid amidst the fires at Rouen.

And there she lay, at last, for the first time, with no answer in her eyes to mine; and yet, boy as I was, inspiration came to me with her last words. I seemed not so much to have lost her, as to have to succeed her.

Not to be cared for any more, but to care for others, that was the dying charge. And Elaine, though she had not heard it (none heard those words but me), seemed to feel it, for she clung to me, and looked to me to decide, to will, to think, almost it seemed, to live and breathe for her. But with my father and Owen it was different. What, indeed, could a child like me do for them?

From some of those mysterious spells that seal the lips of children, I never could tell him or any one, then, of those last words.

He came to me, like a child, for me to tell him again and again every detail of the last days, and never wearied of my saying how his name had been on her lips to the last. But the misery mastered him, as it must do all who do not master it. And after a time he seemed to shrink from all that recalled her, even from Elaine and me.

The Almighty knows the way He takes, but, to all seeming, the world, little or great, is not better, but lower and worse for the blanks the good leave in it.

Gradually the old wild life, which had reigned in the castle before our mother came to it, was resumed. There were days of the chase, followed by drinking bouts deep into the night, and the wrecking customs stealing in again unreproved, and Owen at all the revels;

the oaths, for which we English were too famous everywhere, seeming to amuse the revellers like a lady's jest from the boyish lips of Owen, the wit and darling of those wild revels; and all my mother's lessons, it seemed, buried with her.

Her charge lay heavy on me, and I had to work it out all alone. How was I to "care" for Owen, or any one? What did "taking care" mean? Certainly it did not mean scolding or even advising. What had it meant with our mother? Chiefly, it seemed to me, being good and loving. First of all, loving.

This became clear to me one night, when the mirth in the hall had been especially wild, and Owen especially brilliant, flashing at last into impertinence, impertinence which angered my father, who forthwith despatched us both to bed.

As usual, I turned to go into our mother's empty chamber, before I slept, to say the old prayers before the crucifix. I asked Owen to come with me; but he dashed impatiently away. "I am no priest," he said pettishly, "though I am not the eldest son. Pity thou wert the eldest; I heard old Sir Bors say to my father, thou wouldst have made a grave and gentle abbot."

"And what did our father answer?"

"He only laughed, and said it was as well his Jacob had the birthright, the Esaus too often only threw it away."

"Did my father call me Jacob?" I said; and a sudden passion of resentment seized me. For Father

Adam had been telling this history of Esau and Jacob lately to Elaine and me, and we agreed in thinking Jacob a mean traitor and supplanter.

"Jacob robbed and cheated his brother. What but good have I ever done to thee?"

"Good enough," he laughed lightly—"enough and too much. Sermons on swearing, as good as Father Adam's. Go to thy prayers; but don't, I beg, say them double for me. I had liever be preached to, than prayed for, like a soul in purgatory."

His words stung me to the heart, and I went alone to our mother's oratory, not so much to pray as to complain to God how unjust my brother was. But I did not find the oratory empty. Little Elaine was there.

"I have been waiting for thee, brother," she said (she always called me only "brother"). "I thought you would bring Owen."

"I have been trying to bring Owen," I said, "and he will not come."

"Then we two must pray for him," she said.

"He told me not," I said, my heart still a caldron black and foaming, like that sea outside.

"That shows he wants it all the more," she said, a little sleepily, leaning her fair head on my shoulder.

"But he has said cruel things to me!" I murmured.

"Hush!" she whispered, "we must not tell God that. It might make him displeased with Owen!"

And she began, and I had to join, and to put off my

complainings. The little one had saved me from one of those terrible prayers which are so like curses.

"Dear brother Owen," we said; and "let us say another Our Father for him," she added. And as I said it, the caldron in my heart subsided into a soft ripple on a sunny beach.

"Forgive us our trespasses," I said, "ours, ours." And when I came back to lie down by Owen's side, he made a sleepy movement, and said, "Never mind, old man—you are not at all like Jacob, nor I like Esau. You would give me your birthright if I wanted it, I know, and the mess of pottage into the bargain. And you may pray for me as much as you will; only come and fish and hunt with me too!" And he went to sleep quite composed by his concession; for in all our little differences, whatever he had done, or left undone, Owen had a wonderful way of always being in the end the one, not to be forgiven, but to forgive.

That night I lay awake a long time, feeling penitent, but happy, because forgiven I hoped by every one, by Owen, by God, and by myself. For I had been having a bitter taste of the very caldron of hell, which is helpless resentment and hate; and I had come into a vision of heaven, which is the victory of love.

For some months I had been living chiefly for and with Elaine, trying to make her life less lonely, scaling rocks to get wild birds' eggs for her, taking her out in a boat when it was safe for her, training a little moorland pony for her to ride, and teaching her to ride it.

Unconsciously I had been making a selfish little Paradise apart for us two, such as I thought our mother would smile on, and judging from this serene height the poor struggling ones below. And waking up I found my Paradise a prison in which, while shutting others out, I had shut myself in. But yet it puzzled me, that trying to fulfil my mother's command should have brought me to the verge of hating my brother; and I resolved, the next day, to tell Father Adam what she had said, and to ask him how I could fulfil it.

Father Adam had been taking care of people so many years, he ought to know. In general he never seemed to have much to say; but where trouble and perplexity were he was always wanted, and always at hand. And a few days before he had spoken of preparing us for our first communion next Easter. I sought him, therefore, in the chapel, after his morning mass, and told him all.

"To take care!" he sighed. "To be a shepherd, when thou art but a poor helpless lamb!"

"Was it a mistake?" I said, feeling the question almost blasphemy.

"It was the yearning of the mother's heart, longing to leave something motherly behind," he said after a pause. "God forbid I should say such sacred, last words were a mistake. But there is the devil within and around us, the proud discontented spirit; and he is content enough to have any of us shepherds, or anything, if only he can hinder our being humble sheep following the Good Shepherd."

"And lambs, of course," I said, "cannot be shepherds."

"All the sheep, and lambs too, are shepherds, or shepherd helpers," he replied, "as far as they are true sheep. The lambs may shepherd the lambs, but chiefly by being good lambs."

"Was I not trying to be a good lamb?" I said.

"A little too good, perhaps," he said, with a little dry, kind smile; "as good as a sheep-dog. A lamb that keeps bleating and moaning over the straying ones is, after all, not a shepherd, but only a troublesome lamb."

"But, father, surely I did not bark or bite!" I said.

"No; only growled a little softly," he replied, "and wert a little too near calling in the dogs to bark and bite."

I hung my head, feeling not sure whether Father Adam misunderstood me, or understood me better than I understood myself.

"Can thy father teach thee nothing, and give thee no share of his work?" he resumed.

"He has Owen," I said.

"But thou hast thy father," he replied, "to honour and obey. And hast thou nothing to learn of Owen?" he continued, laying his hand a moment on my bowed head. "Is there nothing thy brother does better than thou?"

"Many things," I said. And by my humiliation in saying so I knew that the thorn which had fretted the sore in my heart was being pulled out. "He rides and manages a boat better than I can."

"Then tell him so, and let him teach and help thee," Father Adam replied. "Keep beside him and thy father at sea, at the chase, at the feast."

"At the drinking bouts," I said; "with the oaths and the drunken songs?"

"Other people's evil words need not hurt thee," said the old man thoughtfully.

"But if I should grow used to them, and cease to hate them?"

"If we love good, that is God, enough, we shall never cease to hate evil. If we love our brothers enough, we shall never cease to grieve at what hurts them. We may scorn the sin, and hate the sinner. But if we love the sinner enough, we must hate the sin."

"But the wrecking," I resumed, "which my mother hated and stopped. Should I be there?"

"There, above all," he said, his dry, slow speech kindling up. "There, to do what she would; save men instead of cargoes."

"It is hard," I said.

"The sea *is* harder than the shore," he replied; "but thou art a man, not a woman. Though indeed women, poor things! in their way, have as good a share as any of the waves and storms."

His words seemed stern and sharp to me at first. My mother had seemed to lift me to be a sharer with herself. And Father Adam seemed to put me below my brother. Was this just? The old man probably

saw this in my face, for he came back, and said to me very gently—

"Thy mother made no mistake, my boy. With God's help thou shalt yet take care of them all. But an old shepherd who has made many mistakes may save thee from some. There is but one holiness for all, for we are all children, and for children, above all—to *learn* and to *love*. Those who learn are sure to teach. Those who love are sure to serve."

And so with his own hands the old priest pushed my little boat off through the breakers, and kept me from fancying I was helping those in peril on the sea by wailing and wringing hands upon the shore.

I linger so long on these early days, because in them lie the roots of my life, the double parentage which linked us with France as well as England; the words of my mother, which have been the spring of my life, inspiring me to such humble bits of care-taking and shepherding as made me understand a little more Joan the Maid, and those to whom the feeding of the great flocks is given.

The next months I spent beside my brother and my father, learning what I could of the craft of the huntsman and the seaman, and all knightly exercises. For none of these things were play to us. The wild boars and wolves had not been driven out of the neighbouring forests, and in winter often made inroads on the peasants' fields.

On the sea, perilous as it was, much of our actual

livelihood depended. And on land or at sea war has been no rare outbreak, but the continual state of Christendom during the whole of my life.

For seventy years the war with France had lasted, from a time before we were born, without symptom of close or decision. The hero of our boyhood was the valiant young King Henry V. Agincourt echoed across to us in the autumn of 1415. I remember it by the bonfires signalling the victory from point to point along our coast, and by my mother having a requiem mass said daily for all the slain, French and English; for all, she said, met at one gate on the other side of death, and were no more separated into French and English there, but into the wicked and the just. And into her dying chamber, four years afterwards, the news of our king's marriage at Troyes with the French Princess Katharine, brought hope and gladness. She thought it might bring peace and amity, knowing less of politics than of pity; and in that hope she went where, with the larger vision, it must be easier to wait. And soon after she died came the birth, at Windsor, of the little prince, Henry VI. of England and France; and then the death of the valiant King Henry V., and the division of power among his brothers, Bedford, Gloucester, Beaufort. But never peace.

II.

Elaine's Story.

WHEN my brother Percival left me to go on his true Quest, to lead the boy's beginning of the knightly life with Owen, hunting the wild animals through moor and forest, and cleaving the wild waves in the fishing craft, he went forth to a world of life and stir, of living voices and living deeds. But I was left in a land of echoes out of a dead world.

I sat trying to finish my mother's embroideries, or I climbed alone to the old places where we used to go to bring her flowers and sea-treasures, or I murmured over the old prayers. But all, work and wanderings and prayers, seemed like dying echoes of what had been. Of course I did not say this to myself then; but I understand it now, in looking back.

It seemed to me as if all life were as the Morte d'Arthur our mother told us of. I wandered alone, like the king by "the waters wap and the waves wan," on the shore of ghosts and echoes, and everything in this life seemed like a heap of broken stories without meaning, friendship deceived, and love loving wrong, and

highest hopes ending in failure; and there lay no hope save in death, and not much in that, lest it should prove we had entered the next world at the wrong gate, and find it as bewildered and inexplicable as this.

I was but a child, but I was feeble and dwarfed, and not as other children; and when I looked at my own face in my mother's steel mirror sometimes, it seemed to me as fair as hers, and when I saw and felt my own misshapen limbs, they seemed to me a picture of all this twisted and puzzled world; as if an enemy, a wicked elf, had broken into some sculptor's carving-chamber, and had misplaced all the work, putting heads of angels on bodies of satyrs, and crowning a beautiful arrow-pierced Sebastian with the face of a grinning fool.

Then I tried to comfort myself by thinking of the Sangreal, of Galahad always victor, and Percival victor, though all but vanquished, and, above all, of the sister of Percival, who shed the blood from her arm to give life to the dying lady, and thereof herself died.

That seemed to me the loveliest story of all, the only glimpse of hope in all the dark and tangled web of the world. Living blood of sacrifice like that might come even from a maid like me, from a shrivelled arm like mine.

The sister of Sir Percival became to me like a sister of my own. She was my solace, she and the crucifix, my mother's great wooden crucifix with the bowed head and the tender patience of the brows and lips, and the mercy in the outstretched arms.

But that also was death; failure and defeat and death. How many must have been cruel beyond thought, how many more must have been ungrateful and forgetful exceedingly, ere that Healer and Lover of men could have been stretched on that cross!

It was not defeat, it was victory, Father Adam said. It was redemption.

But when I thought of our mother dying, and the evil things she hated living on, and the people she grieved over growing worse, of the drinking bouts and the wreckings, who and what, I kept asking, were redeemed?

Mother Margery, our foster-mother, saw, I suppose, that I was growing unnaturally thin and pale and grave. For one day she took me to her cottage in the sheltered nook under the cliff, and she said, "It is not good for little ones to be alone." And there all that day I watched Margery spinning and then weaving at her loom. And it was a rest and delight to me to see something growing, coming into being, instead of fading, though it was only a ball of yarn and a web of coarse wool. And close at hand, in a shed outside, was her husband Peter's workshop, where he made yokes and ploughs and benches. It was like a breath of spring to me to see this weaving and making. The work at the castle seemed so much to be mere hunting and driving the creatures to death on sea and land, or reaping dead men's harvests, or at best mending or using or decorating other people's work. But on this lower level of the

world I seemed to touch higher work, more like God's, shaping, making, and causing new things to be.

Margery let me come as often and stay as long as I liked. She taught me to spin and weave, and Peter made me little tools, and taught me to shape platters and boxes, for I could not bear to make anything not real—that could not be used. And to see things grow into being out of shapelessness—out of nothing—was a delight. Also it took me from the weary copying of the embroidery full of the traces of my mother's fingers, without her smile.

Peter and I became great friends.

"Why do not the nobles and knights choose to be carpenters," I said to him one day, "instead of huntsmen and fishers? It seems to me as if they chose the work of beasts instead of the work of men."

A flash came across Peter's face. It was not a great ruddy blunted face like many of those I saw, but a sharp, pallid, eager face, such as might have suited my little body better than his, muscular and compact as it was, though not tall.

"A Great Prince, the Noble of nobles, did once choose to be a carpenter," he said.

"You mean God," I said, "our Father Christ. But He came from so very high, I suppose all here below seemed just the same to Him."

"I don't think it all seemed the same," was Peter's answer. "I think He knew, and chose the best."

That was quite a new light to me.

Of course I knew Jesus our Lord, and the blessed apostles and disciples, had been poor, but I always thought they were knights and dames all the time, like Sir Joseph of Arimathea, and St. Mary Magdalene, who lived in her own castle, and only put poverty on as a disguise, like knights at a joust.

I knew also that holy men, hermits, and friars had chosen to be poor and to wear wretched clothes; but every one knew that was because they were holy, not because they could not help it.

That our heavenly King should have been really a carpenter, and worked at a real bench, like Peter's, for real bread, was a new thought to me; and at first I did not like it at all. I had thought, if I thought at all, that the distinction between knights and churls was practically inward and eternal, and that our servants would naturally be delighted to serve us for ever in the next world. In the Arthur legends there were no poor at all, save serving-men, and people to fight and be killed in the great battles.

But if the Lord Christ had chosen to be a carpenter, everything seemed turned upside down; and who could say if it might not continue so in that other world?

I suppose Margery saw I was displeased, for she said to Peter, "Keep thy levelling notions to thyself. They have cost us enough already."

For some days I did not go back to the cottage. But the seed Peter had dropped was living, and it grew. The more displeased I was the more I wanted to see

Peter again, and tell him. And after all, when I came to think of it, the poor being so many, if indeed they were more in the place of the Master, the world might, after all, be less of a tangle than it looked in the legends and from the castle.

When I went back, for some time Peter was dumb.

But the ice soon melted; and slowly, day by day, a new world all around and beneath us, but as unknown as Ind or Cathay, opened before me; the great world of toiling men and women—the masons who built our churches and castles, the carpenters who made our beds and tables, the smiths who forged our knightly arms. And this world here in England, I found, had a history of its own graven in the hearts of men—a history of toil, and of wrong, of struggles for what they deemed Divine rights through what we deemed rebellion. There were names honoured as heroic in this world, which we considered infamous, which I had hitherto heard spoken with a curse, like Judas; John Ball, the priest; Jack Straw, Wat Tyler, or one of our own class, a traitor to the Church and the State, hanged and slowly burned not many years before at St. Giles's Fields, near London, called in this new world "the good Lord Cobham."

And through this under world, at this moment, and for forty years, were sounding the words of a Book, an English Book (the Book all Christians held sacred, but no other Christians seemed to possess, save in Latin), plain, homely, mighty, Divine words done into English fifty years ago by a learned priest called Wycliffe. And

this Book Peter seemed to know by heart, at least the part of it about our Lord; for I learned it all from his lips. The Book itself was a hidden treasure I did not see for years afterwards.

And wonderful was the hope that story gave to me. It quietly adjusted everything, pieced the broken world, and our little broken lives—gave meaning to the inexplicable; and yet not by trying to explain things, but simply by bringing in the Light. It made me even learn to give thanks for my poor misshapen body. It was a link with the misshapen, twisted world below; and it was a link with the healing Lord, who lived so much among the sick.

In that carpenter's cottage two things were set open to me, which have made the joy and the work of all my life: the great world of the poor, of the people; and the life of the Master. I escaped out of the prison of the rich, the luxurious, the few. I learned to love the wide world of the toiling, the poor, who earn daily bread by daily work.

And there, walking with them along the dusty highways, sailing with them in their fishing-boats, asking a drink of water from one of them at the village well, toiling beside them at the carpenter's bench, resting with them on the grass, clothed like them, eating of their common food, paying tax and tribute among them; not living in the castle and visiting them thence, but living in the fisherman's cottage, and letting the rich and great, if also weary and heavy-laden, come to Him—deeper,

lower than that, dying the death of a bondman, I found my Lord. I found Him in the field, by the sea-shore, by the poor sick-bed; and wherever He came I found Him healing the sick, blessing the children, forgiving (which is the highest healing), bringing patience and hope, and joy unspeakable, and light and love.

Then, going back to the castle, I found Him there also. Going back to our mother's crucifix, I found—ah! I found that the head so patiently bowed there was the face I knew best and loved best in all the world.

And He, not dead, but living.

Not a soft silvery feather in a sea-gull's breast, not a curve or a fold in a pinion or a shell, but His living touch was there. Not a sick child or a worn-out labourer in the fields but through the parched or lisping lips murmured His, "Me—*unto Me!*" Jesus and the poor. Ah, what a world to live—to die for! What a life to live with, to live in, to live by!

And all the while, though we knew it not, He was training in the quiet valley by the river Meuse, in a peasant's cottage, helping her father in the fields and her mother by the hearth, a child, a little peasant maiden, obeying the voice of her parents, and with heart open to hear the voice of her King, Joan the Maid, "Daughter of God," deliverer of France from ruin and England from crime, renewing the world, as of old, from the lowly places, whither go the roots and whence spring the wells of life.

III.

Peter the Wright's Story.

WHEN first she came to us—the child, the maid, the little Dame Elaine,—came to my Margery's cottage in her dainty raiment, her fine linen and purple, her golden net around her brown hair, her mother's jewels clasping her white throat—I hated the sight of her. She seemed to me, she and hers, like evil, fair, fat ghouls that had lived on the blood of our lost little ones. I was sullen and sour to her in my heart, however Margery might constrain me to be courteous. We had suffered so much from her like, since the days when, after the rising under Wat Tyler, the people had trusted themselves like loyal brothers, like guileless children, to the royal word of the boy-king, Richard, and had then by him and his forty thousand been hung like snared vermin, or tortured like hunted-down beasts of prey. My father was a yeoman with his own good freehold then, hardly earned and thriftily kept. But the men of law working for the barons disputed his title, and robbed us of our land, and then, being landless, brought us under the Statute of Labourers, and forbade

us to leave the land they had robbed us of, constraining us to till it for the lord, or to live on what he chose to give.

They dragged us down into bondage again, and broke my father's heart. There was no way left out of our misery but through the Church; and my father, who had learned much of Wycliffe and his poor priests, seeing I loved learning, strove to get me made a clerk. He hoped I would also have been a priest, either "poor" to teach the poor, which he thought "divine," or rising on the ladder of the priesthood as many before had done, to be a parson, an abbot, or even a bishop, remembering in the palace the heart of the poor, and so binding poor to rich.

But, woe to us! the Church herself had grown worldly, the abbots were landowners as proud as the barons, the bishops were courtiers of England or Rome, the friars were pardon-sellers and plunderers of the poor, and none wanted landless men.

And, moreover, the lords did their utmost to shut out the old way to freedom from us; they sought to make a law that no son of a bondman or bondwoman should be suffered to take orders in the Church, lest by that means they might be advanced in the world.

Thus, the end of my learning and reading was only that I could read. And so, while my feet were as fettered as ever, my mind was set free to think, and my eyes were opened to see; which only made the bonds chafe harder.

We had but two books (I never learned Latin), two English books, Piers Plowman and Wycliffe's Bible. These we kept carefully hidden in the straw of a mattress, and on winter nights, when labour was done, by the light of a candle, I used to read.

Both of the books seemed to deepen the gloom. Piers the Plowman sang dolefully how money, meed, and greed ruled all, only checked by hunger, which assailed both rich and poor.

For the ravages of the Black Death were scarcely over when he wrote, when half the people in our parts died within a few months, and the fields were left untilled, and half of many a stricken flock lay dead, with no priest to bury them, and the other half strayed, helpless and hopeless, with no shepherd to care for them; and the cattle wandered through the unreaped corn, with none to hinder or to herd them. That book was a doleful picture of a doleful world.

But the other Book, as all may know, dark as its pictures of the world are, being true, is nevertheless a book of hope and a gospel. Yet to me in those days it brought no hope. I thought of it as the book forbidden by the worldly priests, the Lollard book, for which men had been content to be burnt, which had taught the sheep to know and to hate the hireling shepherds, which had inspired the generation of my father to hope in a just Christ, King of rich and poor, and to rise for their divine and human rights, cost what it might.

And there I stood amidst the ruins of our father's

rights and hopes, old wrongs riveted down on our necks, as it seemed, for ever, with fresh chains. And there was a bitter comfort in seeing that the Book condemned the robbery of the poor, and said that their blood cried out unto God from the ground. The blood of the multitudes which had cried out so long, and no answer had come, save that old promise that there would come a day of Doom!

Not a little bit here and there was wrong, the Book said to me (as I deemed). All was wrong; popes, and kings, and barons, and priests, and friars. War was wicked, and riches were a curse, and Law only forged chains to fix on the wrongs; and the burden of all the wrongs rolled ever down and down upon us, the peasants.

The lord of our village was a hard man; he went to the wars in France, and he must have horses, and caparisons, and arms, and men-at-arms, and archers to go with him—will they, nill they. And they went; and there was some cruel solace in the thought that our good bowmen made the noblest blood of France flow like rivers.

But my lot was to stay at home, and see hunger lay siege to my own little homestead, and strive to keep him off and fail, and see my children pule, and pine, and die, until at last some scattered sufferers among us took courage and rose against the lords. But, though despair may give courage, it gives scant wisdom; the leaders and teachers, the few nobles and priests, who had led us

once, were soon gone, on the gibbet, the scaffold, or stake. And we had to flee, and Margery and I came to the wild Western sea, and there her last babe was born and died, and the peasant's sorrow went, as was wont, to supply the lady's lack. Margery became foster-mother to the boy Percival, and the boy lived and flourished, and we were left bereaved and destitute, to toil at the old toil for the masters, loathsomely lightened now of the maintenance of our beloved.

And Margery, being but a mother, and finding it more needful to love than even to live, grew to love the mother and the children. But I sate apart, a foreigner among the Western men, bitter in heart and hopeless, until Elaine the maiden came and crept into my heart.

It was the dwarfed and suffering body, it was the wistful look of pain and helplessness in the child's eyes that began to melt the ice. And then her tears for our sorrows.

Margery would never let me talk bitter talk to the child, which at first made me sullen and silent, and then constrained me to tell her what I knew, leaving the bitterness out; and in telling her the story, the wrongs grew sweetened into sorrows.

For had not she also sorrows, the innocent babe? sorrows that looked like wrongs, but which, if wrongs, could be traced to no hand but Almighty God's; which made a break in the cry of revolt and bitter complaining. And then she wrung out of me, I scarce know how, the story of the Gospels. And as I told it to the

child, and saw her dear face glow and shine at the words and works of Christ, the form of the Son of man seemed to change to me, and instead of the avenging judge scourging the traffickers from the Temple, and thundering woe after woe on the rich (though that also is true), I saw the Healer touching the outcast leper none would touch, letting the sinner no righteous man would look at touch Him, the young man in peasant's clothes (He was but thirty) take the little children in His arms; the innocent sufferer answering to the blows which knocked the nails into the torn hands with "Father, forgive them."

Alas, alas! I saw that poor and rich alike had forsaken Him, and had loved Him; that the rich man had stooped to bury the poor mangled body; that He was so poor that the poorest were rich compared with Him, and so rich that the richest had to come as beggars to Him: that from the throne to the dungeon every corner of this earth was sacred with His presence, for He was not conquered but the conqueror, not dead but living, and loving all—all, rich and poor, noble and villain, bond and free. And so meaning and hope came into all things slowly, very slowly. For I began to see that to grow more like this Son of God, by ever so little steps —patient, loving, obedient—was joy, and conquest, and wealth, and royalty; and that this was a kind of shaping that came not as a child's snow image, by easy moulding of soft hands, but as with iron and gold, by fiery fusing and much hammering. Wherefore, it was no won-

der that so much of the world should be more like a forge than a hall of feasting.

Also, the child led me back again, I scarce know how, to religion, which I had grown to hate as the hollowest of all the hollownesses of the false and hollow world; the cruelest deception, because breaking the highest promise.

To her it was not hollow. To her the story of the one True Life linked itself to the crucifix, to her mother's lessons of Creed and Paternoster, and Sacrament and Altar.

She made me say the Our Father again morning and night as when I was a child, taking it for granted I had never left it out. And she made me come to Mass again with her on Sunday, if only to hear the praises of the Agnus Dei, who takes away the sins of the world—the Lamb of God of whom my Book spoke, by the old river, and on the throne of God.

And more, she made me and old Father Adam friends; me who had grown to hate the priests and the friars like poison—not without reason; for I found that he and I, and others, perchance many of his order, had been all the time soldiers in one army, though often fighting in the dark against each other.

Our first acquaintance came about on this wise.

Our little lady expected me to receive the Sacrament at Easter. It was many years since I had. There had been much angry discussion amongst us as to how the body and blood of the Lord could or did nourish, or

whether heavenly treasures could come unsullied through corrupt human hands; whether the wicked unabsolved priest could absolve; whether unholy hands could consecrate.

But of all this I could not speak to the child. I remember once stammering an excuse that I did not like to do what I did not understand. But the dark wistful eyes looked wonderingly into mine as she said—

"It is not *you* who have to do it, is it? I thought God did it all, and gave it all. If He understands and knows how, is not that enough? I thought we had only to believe and receive."

And the child's words went deep,—and I had to go, as she said.

Should I starve myself from bread, because wise men could not agree how the seed grew into the ear, or because the miller was not honest?

Accordingly I went to Father Adam to receive absolution. I suppose my manner was proud and sullen enough, for the old man said—

"Have *you* absolved *me?*"

I thought he was mocking, and answered angrily—

"Little enough do the parsons and friars care what the flock has to say of them."

"But I am one who do care," he replied quite seriously and gently. "I mean what I say. You have been at Mass to-day. Have you absolved me?"

And then he read to me out of his book, and showed

to me how every day, before the people confess to the priest, the priest confesses to the people and says, "I confess to you, my brothers, that I have sinned much by thought, word, and deed; by my fault, by my fault, by my very great fault; and I beseech you, my brethren, to pray for me to the Lord our God." "And you," said Father Adam, "by the mouth of the child or man who answers, say, 'May the Almighty God have mercy on you, and, having forgiven your sins, lead you to everlasting life.' Every day I have been saying this to you, and you to me."

"It is a pity it was in Latin," I said.

"Perhaps it is," he replied. "The words were written hundreds of years before there was anything but Latin to say it in. But henceforth say it in English, brother, for me. You will know when I ask you by my striking my hand on my breast."

There could be no suspicion that he was jesting now; the dry, quiet voice had broken down, tears were running over the old withered face.

"It is a pity it is all in Latin," I murmured. "How was I to know?"

"Forgive us, brother, forgive me," he said, "let us all forgive each other, priest and layman, prince and peasant. There is much to forgive." And then restraining himself, and his voice gathering strength and firmness as he spoke, he said, "Only, do not think no one ever wanted to set the wrongs of the world right before you." And then he told me how every monastery, or at least every

ancient one, however it might now seem a mere society of serf-holders and landowners, feasting on the toil of others, had begun in an apostolic twelve of hard-working men, living on the toil of their own hands, renouncing the joys of the world for joy in God, dwelling as labouring men among the labouring, as poor among the poor, ennobling toil for all, by joining it with priestly sacrifice. And friar, he said, meant brother.

If the monks had meant to consecrate labour, the friars had meant to glorify poverty, to glorify the lot of the multitudes by making it the choice of the elect—poverty and brotherhood. Poor as the poorest, to enrich the poor with heavenly riches, and brothers of all men, prince and peasant were to become among them alike poor and alike brother.

"If the friars had kept to their first estate," he said, "the rich would have learned there is no title for Christian men, brethren of Christ, higher than brother: the poor would have learned there is no lot higher than labour. There would have been no peasant revolt, and no Statute of Labourers, no Wat Tyler or Jack Straw. The church would have gathered all the world into a divinely equal brotherhood, and ordered all men in a divinely differing kingdom." And then with bitter anguish he lamented things as they are.

"We live! we live," he said, "like the demoniac of Gadara, among the tombs. It is an age of tombs, and a world of tombs. The monasteries are whited sepulchres; the friaries are open graves; the Crusades are robberies.

No man now builds great churches; no man sings great songs, or does great deeds. We can but copy and conclude, and spoil. Not this or that religious foundation only—all Christendom is a tomb."

"But Christ is risen!" I said, "and we pray, Thy kingdom come. Is He then a king like Arthur in the legends, slumbering in some far-off valley? His kingdom broken up, and His work ruined? Is that the end?"

"That is *not* the end," he replied. "One earthquake and one angel rolled the stone from His Holy Sepulchre. The heavens shall be moved, and shall roll up as a scroll, when the stone is rolled away from this unholy sepulchre in which we live."

"What shall we do then?" I said. "Hate the world? Lie down and die?"

"Nay," Father Adam replied; "love the world the Lord loved, and rise up and live, and serve and succour every shipwrecked wretch we find. Only, brother, never think again you were the first to try and set the wrongs of the world right, or that you will be the last; and remember to pray God to forgive *us*, and me."

So I went and received the blessed Sacrament, and forgave, and prayed to be forgiven.

And meantime, in one far-off valley, though we knew it not, the King was filling one peasant child with His love, and moulding her into His likeness, and training her to help forward His kingdom among men.

IV.

Percival's Story.

IT was a terrible day when our father was brought home from the chase, bleeding and stunned, and all the household gathered wailing around him, thinking him smitten to death, if not dead.

From the blow on the head, which made him unconscious, he soon recovered; but his horse, in leaping the fence over which he fell, had fallen on him, and his thigh was broken, and there were no leeches with us skilful enough to set the broken bone fairly, and from the first he said he should not live, and but for his sins and his children, was content to die.

"To you, my children," he said, "the loss may be gain. My sister Griselda and Sir Richard will be better friends for lads than I. And as to my sins, they would scarce have grown less by living."

From the time he was stricken, my father—the father of our mother's days—seemed to come back to us. It seemed as if that blow smote away a mask of ice which had been forming over him, and his true self came out again.

He spoke little of himself, unless indeed in shrift to Father Adam; and Father Adam said never man made a clearer shrift with a more broken heart.

He spoke much of our mother. He had his couch moved where he could see her crucifix, and the picture, and the far-off line of the sea.

"They wanted me to say it was good she should be taken away," he said, "and I never would or could. She was taken from me by heaven in judgment, not in mercy. But *this* is in mercy, the severe mercy of love, and I am content. For, ever since she left, I have been like a lost spirit in hell—in fires that were destroying, destroying not the evil in me, but me. And any fire would be sunshine compared with that."

And so he seemed to have a kind of pleasure in his pains, in the torture of the broken bones and the rough remedies. The hasty irritability which had terrified us since our mother's death passed away. His old smile came back. He made little jests about his pains, and the blunders of the bewildered leech, and his boys' awkward nursing, and was pleased with all we did, and never murmured, and seemed to rest on his bed of pain as on a couch of roses.

Which Father Adam said (knowing his shrift) was quite natural.

For it meant simply that his whole being had ceased to fight against the Almighty, and had sunk down to rest on the will of God.

Wherefore, in looking back on those dying hours of

our father, we look back on them, not as on a time of darkness and confusion, but of returning life and peace, as of his coming back to us for a while to cheer and strengthen us, before he left us on a long and not sorrowful journey.

And the last night, before his mind began to wander, he called me to him and said, unconsciously almost echoing her words—

"Percival, *take care of them.*"

And then he added words of fond father's pride, as if he felt that I had, more than anything, continued to him our mother's presence upon earth, and kept the gate open for him to come back, as now he said he had.

I could not see how. I had blundered in so many ways, and had feared I was often like a feeble jet of cold water, rather kindling up the fires I could not check.

But he said it was not so. He said I had kept the sense of what she loved and hated ever before his reluctant eyes, so that when the mighty hand of God smote away the evil, he was left, not in a blank horror of great darkness, but with her dear face and the holy thorn-crowned Face shining on him, and the hope of being made one day, at any cost, like her and like Him.

For saying nothing, for doing so little, only for loving and trying, God, who giveth freely, gave this imperishable joy to me!

Not quite, then, had he suffered me to fail or betray her last behest! And so it was sealed to me once more from sacred dying lips.

Not to be taken care of, to take care; not to be ministered unto, but to minister. And then our father died, and we passed on to other stages.

It was our father's will that we should leave his castle and go to live with his sister Griselda and her husband, Sir Richard de Danescombe, in the neighbouring county.

The partings were hard to me, having in my soul so much of the slow nature of plants and vegetating creatures that take root, and strike down deep, and cannot be uprooted from anything without being torn in their living fibres. And yet the castle had to me been a place of much combat and pain.

Whereas to Owen, having more of the bird that migrates than of the plant that roots, in him, although the castle had been to him a place of delight and triumph, hero as he was of the chase and the coast, the parting seemed nothing to the hope of striking into the new fields of adventure and pleasure and companionship.

He met the tears and lamentations of those who grieved to lose him, not with coldness and apathy, but with an overpowering sunshine of promise and hope, as if he would carry them with him, going on a quest whence, in some unexplained way, he would come back to enrich and glorify them all; whereas Elaine, being a girl, could only weep, leaving a fragment of her heart with the familiar people, and even things; and I, being a boy, and not choosing to weep, could only be silent or give some mute sign of regret and affection, like a dumb beast.

We two went as exiles from all the world we loved and knew; Owen as a conqueror promising new kingdoms, and a discoverer looking for new worlds.

And yet I think our grief cheered those we parted from more than Owen's promises.

V.

Elaine's Story.

IT was indeed a new world we went to when we left the castle for the manor, though a day's riding brought us to it. For the first time we saw towns, fair manors, and lordly abbeys. And in seeing this new world it seemed as if for the first time I learned to see the old.

The places familiar to us from childhood seem scarcely known to us, any more than our own faces, until we see them in the mirror of contrast.

It seemed coming into another age as well as into another world. The very language of the common people was different. Most on our coast spoke a tongue akin to the Welsh; the wild fishers' chants were the music of another race.

Owen was delighted with everything. It was coming from a barbarous land, he said, to see the large, well-caparisoned horses, instead of our wild mountain ponies, the gay dresses of the burghers, the games they played at. Whilst, on the other hand, we two young barbarians, Percival and I, deemed it a point of loyalty

to prefer the old familiar things and ways and men to the new.

I remember, as we rode through Abbot's Weir, seeing the men of the town, old and young, playing on the green at a game with balls; and Owen stopped and watched eagerly, and my uncle's ancient serving-man who guided us said—

"You do not play that in your country?"

And Percival made answer—

"No; in our country we have winds and waves to play with, and do not need toys. And if men need play, they wrestle with each other."

"Then what do the boys play at?" said the old man, somewhat nettled.

"The boys learn to be men," said Percival.

At which the old servant smiled and said—

"Learn as fast as thou canst, my master; but thou hast also to *grow*."

Whereupon Percival, fearing he had spoken boastingly, and as becomes not youth, with that rare smile of his which is worth more than all the lavish smiles on gay faces, made answer—

"Thou wilt help us to learn, and God will help us to grow."

Such a strange weight of care lay on Percival in those early days!

We must have been strange, grave children in those days, we two. Percival had borne such a load of care since our mother died, and he began to stand between

us and the world. And I had heard so much of the wrongs of the common people from Peter, and so much of the failure and death of good things and men from him and Father Adam, who had taught me two hymns in Latin which he said were the dirges of the world; and I myself had also known so terribly near what death and dirges meant, that it seemed to me we were living on the side of one of those burning mountains the Crusaders told of; as if life were behind us, and a world melting into ashes in the Day of Wrath before us, and we living in a world of tombs between the two.

"*Dies iræ, dies illa*" lay before us; the evil world in these latest days around us. The King indeed was living, but the Kingdom was broken and the world dying.

But when we came to Danescombe Manor all these questionings and wonderings for the time vanished from me.

Danescombe was a fair and pleasant manor-house little more than a century old. There were wainscotted chambers in it, with oaken sides, and floors that shone like a mirror. And inside I had to sit still under the rule of my aunt Griselda, and broider and spin among her maidens with our sweet cousin Cecilie. And outside the boys had to follow my uncle and be trained in all knightly exercises, and to ride daily to the Benedictine abbey at Abbot's Weir to learn Latin and music; and we all were chidden and snibben like any other lads and lasses, and had no leisure for thinking about the Ages.

And Cecilie and I had our bed-chamber, with two little beds covered with snow-white linen, fragrant from being folded in lavender. And roses and jessamine grew outside our two small windows and looked in.

And when once I told Cecilie about this dreadful thought of our living in a world of tombs, she laughed, and said—

"I do not, nor do the swallows, or the thrushes. Is not there a May every year for every one? And for me it seems always, always May; and now I have you three to sing with, the world seems running over with life, like the little spring under our windows, where the birds come to drink. The world is so glad, and all the fair things in it are so dear and near, I used to long just to take it all to my heart, close, close. I used, so foolish was I, to kneel down and kiss the snow-drops and the lilies, though I scarcely needed to stoop to the dear Queen lilies. And I used to throw my arms around the great, rough old trees and kiss them; they made such merriment with their baby leaves, and I had such a quantity of love to give. But now I have you to hug and kiss; you, you," she said, "dear, grave Princess Elaine, and the trees and flowers will not be jealous: for they knew all the time what I wanted, and they are laughing and whispering to each other all day, 'We are so glad our little lady has found her sister! We are glad! we are glad!'"

And so, for the first time since our mother's death, I became altogether a child.

And the Ages and the Nations went and stood afar off, while I clasped the present moment and Cecilie, and loved.

The present moment, and God.

For Cecilie never seemed to feel I was different from other children. She wrapped me round in such folds of love, and she expected me to laugh and be glad, as she was; and I loved her and was glad without trying.

Her beauty was sunshine to me, and seemed something of my own.

And I also had one treasure to give Cecilie which was new to her. She had a book, and could read, and taught me; an English book just like herself, all life, and open air, and joy, and movement, and May; the book of the Canterbury Pilgrims, by Chaucer. And I had a Book, though I had never seen it and could not read, written on my mind by Peter's telling, a Book also of the fields and the open air, about stars, and lilies, and boats, and wild winds, and seas made quiet as tame lambs by the Voice they knew.

And dark and sorrowful as were many of the stories in my Book, they did not make us sad. They were only dark as winter and night, and seeds buried in the earth, are dark. The summer and the day and the harvest were only hidden in that winter and night and sorrow.

For the Sun of that Story had really risen, we knew, never more to set, and was shining on us, in flowers, and

trees, and mornings, and stars, and home, and father, and mother, and brothers, and everything that made us glad.

And I often felt as if underneath all the mirth of her Chaucer there was a sigh; and underneath all the sadness of my Book a song.

VI.

Percival's Story.

YES, it was a new world and a new life we came into at Danescombe; to me, perhaps, more than to any one.

The weight of care dropped off from me. I had to be a boy among boys, to learn, to obey, to submit, to be ruled, and for the first time since my mother's death I felt what it was to be young, almost what it was to live. For I had grown scarcely to have a life of my own, so hard had that charge of caring for the others proved as a yoke on my neck.

And light indeed was the yoke of obedience compared with that yoke of care.

Was this a step upward?

Perhaps not; but a needful downward step into the common paths on the way upward it certainly was. And, for ever, I thank God for those few following natural years which made me as other men.

I can think of them now with calm and joy, in the far-off past, and with the light of the near future of the new youth upon them.

For looking back, even more than I knew at the time, I see how one thought, one presence, one hope filled them, and made them one May and spring-tide to me.

That presence was Cecilie, our cousin Cecilie.

And to have loved such a being as she was and for ever is, to have seen her in all her grace and truth as only love can see, is a gift which will enrich the heart for ever.

I can scarcely think of her apart from the world she made new to me, for the vision and the music of her presence are blended with everything.

Partly because she did not dwell apart in a regal separation from common life, waited on and adored, like the damsels in the Arthur legends, but stirred about the house and gardens, bringing freshness and beauty everywhere; not by magic, but by quiet touches of dainty fingers, as busy as a wren about her nest; not as a star, on high, apart,—as a pervading sunbeam everywhere she shines to me.

The old manor was no fairy palace, though at first it seemed so to us. The linen of the household was not spun, or woven, or washed by magic; nor was it by a word that the currants turned into conserves, or the flour into bread, or the venison into pasties. The maids had to be shown their work by Aunt Griselda, and helped in it by Cecilie.

And thus she comes back to me not only dreaming over her Chaucer or singing to her lute: though also thus I see her, with parted lips and that far-off look in

her eyes, sitting beside Elaine, silent, with the story of fair Constance or of Saint Cecilie before them, a slight flush on her face, gazing into her lovely, pure dream-world, on the turf under the old thorn they loved, its white blossoms falling on her green kirtle, and Elaine gazing on her face as if all the beauty of all dreams were gathered there—as it was, for Elaine and me.

And then I hear the Angelus bell from the little chapel in the hollow, and I see her kneel with downcast eyelids and bowed head, veiled in the waves of her soft brown hair.

And then again I see her rise and sit beside Elaine, and make Elaine tell her stories from the Story which is no dream.

And almost I can read the words, as I watch Cecilie's face. The listener's lips quiver now and then as something moves her, and then close as with deep and holy purpose, the eyes no more vague with pure and delicious dreams, but deep and fixed, as if with the vision of the Face which, as I look on her, I almost seem to see, feeling what she sees.

But for the most part I think of her in movement, making a pastime among the maidens of the work she shared, telling them stories as she moved to and fro with her distaff, or teaching them choruses to her songs; humming like a happy bee as she gathered herbs in the garden or spread them to dry in the parlour-chamber.

And so, like all the beauty of the natural things she lived among, she came into my heart, and took possession,

and reigned. At first, as a sister, unsuspected and welcomed as a child. She was scarce sixteen, a year older than Elaine, a year younger than Owen, and three years younger than I.

It grew worth while to excel in all manly exercises and games, not so much to please as to protect her.

To guard her from word or look that could grieve her became second nature.

So she came into my heart, as a helpless child, and before I was aware, she was reigning as a queen.

I never had a purpose in life but her quiet pleasure in it was the reward.

She was so easy and yet so hard to please; pleased with the least gift of the humblest, yet never to be pleased, in herself, or in any, but with their best.

The smallest act of habitual service from a servant never became a dull matter of course to her. The inspiration of her thanks and her smile pervaded all the common household toil, not from policy, but because she always felt herself naturally every one's servant, and every service to her as a free gift.

And yet, for a work to please her, to give her pleasure, it must be as near perfection as possible. Every blundering step upward won her sympathy; but to satisfy her you must scale the height.

And so, unconsciously, she drew us on, in horsemanship, in feats of arms, even in clothes, and carriage, and tones, and words; not so much that she might be pleased with us, as that we might give her pleasure.

At least, so it was with me.

With Owen she found little fault, and of all the little circle he seemed to care least about her pleasure. Graceful and courteous he was by nature, with an instinct for finding out what pleased every one in little things. But with Cecilie it seemed that he was more intent on demanding than on pleasing or serving her.

Once I remember bringing home antlers of the red deer as a trophy of the chase to her. She received the gift graciously, as always, but instantly her eyes glanced past me to Owen.

"How could you let him be wounded?" she said indignantly.

His hand was bleeding, and darting into the house, in a minute she returned with a soft kerchief, and bound up his wound.

I felt rebuked. The old sacred charge, "*Take care of them all!*" came back to me. Yet I was not grieved. I thought she was only demanding that she should share the care which was my sacred commission.

I never contemplated life or duty or delight except as doubled and shared by her.

Then we went, by my uncle's will, Owen and I, to complete our knightly training in a nobleman's house not far away.

To me it was banishment, but to Owen the new life was unmixed delight, and he took no pains to feign that it was otherwise.

Yet when we parted, Cecilie gave me a cousinly kiss

and a smile, and seemed not to know how hard it was to me to keep back tears. But when she parted from Owen, he smiled, even laughed, and looked back to her with a gay gesture; yet when I looked back she had turned pale and the tears filled her eyes.

Owen rode gaily on, humming a French lay, but an irresistible impulse drew me back to her.

And with quivering lips she only said—

"Take care of him."

Still I thought she meant to make my mother's words her own, and was only saying—

"*We* will take care of him together, thou and I; of Owen, and Elaine, and every one around us whom we can serve and succour, together, thou and I."

We were away many months, and I learned to write like a clerk to send her messages, to herself, or through Elaine.

And Elaine said she watched for these words and treasured them and read them over and over.

It was true they were mostly about Owen, and the care I thought she was sharing with me. And of course I only told her the good about him, the charm he had for every one, from the lady of the castle to the little maid at the porter's lodge. I did not tell her of the orphan niece of the chatelaine, gentle and grave and sweet, to whom he could not help devoting himself with that devotion of the moment which had such a perilous charm for such as did not know the moment before.

How could he help it if all his heart went into his

eyes, those southern eyes of our mother's, with their long lashes and their intensity, and their sudden flashes as from fire-depths within?

Nor did I tell her how I saw the young maiden grow pale and wan when another damsel, bright as morning and gay as a French chanson, drew Owen away into her world of laughter and song and life.

Taking care of Owen was not such an easy task, but taking care of the wounded in his tournaments was certainly beyond any mortal power.

But when we came home again, the veil had soon to be torn from my heart.

Me she welcomed as a comrade who shared a thousand interests with her. She remembered every detail of the life we had been leading, had forgotten no hint or syllable of my letters. She took me to see all her cherished treasures: the hare I had tamed for her, the birds I had caught for her, the garden we had dug together, the Chaucer we had read together.

And the great bloodhound I had trained for her had become her constant companion and guide.

And Owen brought her nothing, and seemed even to have forgotten the familiar ways and places; and they seemed to have little to say to each other, and scarcely even looked at each other.

It was the family purpose that we two should wed, and it was my uncle's determination that Owen and I should go for a while to the French wars, to see a little

of the real game, he said, before we settled into our quiet corner of the world, to take the place of the elders.

I began to think the day was coming when I might speak to Cecilie of this, if further speech were needed. And at last I became sure the moment had come.

It was a fair evening in early spring, the hour she was wont to spend with Elaine, after the work of the day (for hers were working days), under the thicket of old thorns on the slope.

The sunset lingered there, and the leaves were already full enough to make a shelter. Elaine was still busy at some task of my aunt's, but she told me she thought Cecilie was waiting for her under the thorn thicket.

I went with a beating heart, certainly, yet with a joyous calm; more as if I were going to the sacrament of marriage, the perpetual sacrament she was, I trusted, to make all common life to me.

There were voices under the thorns as I drew near, low and clear.

One was Cecilie's.

"I will do what my father and mother will, and I will never grieve him, if my heart were to break."

"But he only cares for you as he cares for me and for Elaine, and for all of us. It is his charge from my mother and my father. He was always as good as a priest. He does not seek anything or any one for himself."

"You think so?" she said, and a joyous accent of conviction came into her voice. "Yes, it must be so! Truest brother and truest friend!"

"True as heaven!" was the reply, "and wanting nothing. But I am selfish and poor, and want *thee*. And none will rejoice over us more than Percival."

"If I could be quite sure!" she said.

"We will be quite sure to-morrow, my beloved," he said, "for I will tell him."

"Not a word," she said, "until I give thee leave."

And then, numb and deaf and blind, I turned away, and heard no more.

"Traitor!" I thought. "He knew! he must have known. Shall I yield her to a heart whose love is as a baby's fancy compared with mine? I who could and would shield her from all the world!"

But before I reached the little garden at the bottom of the slope, Cecilie's little flower-border by the garden of herbs, the irrevocable certainty became clear to me.

"She loves him; she is his." And then, as in my mother's voice, the old charge, "*Take care of Owen.*" My mother would be satisfied for him, I thought. "For me it is over; life is over. All is over but the charge from which I should never have strayed. And Cecilie shall never know."

As I crossed the garden, the light footsteps I should have known in my sleep, in madness, in death, if they had trodden on my grave, came along the path to me, and the soft hand was laid on my arm.

"Percival," she said, "Owen has been saying something to me, and you are our—my best friend."

And, thank God, I had courage to look down straight

into the frank, childlike eyes, and to take her hands, and lay them for a moment on my lips and say—

"Sister Cecilie, you and Owen shall always, so help me God, find me your true brother and friend."

We said no more, only by a sudden movement she took my two hands and pressed them on her cheek, and said, with a ring of joy and gratitude in her voice, always to me like a lark's song—

"Brother! Yes, really brother; my very own brother. That doubles the happiness."

And from that day to this she never guessed. Thank God! she has never guessed.

And so the anguish was all entirely my own, and I was able to be a true brother to them.

My uncle made some demur. He said he had thought Cecilie and me made for each other. Also he did not see how the younger son would fit in as well for the inheritance.

I could make no promises. For one reason, I dared not tell the truth, that my life secured the whole inheritance to them as much as that of a vowed priest; and, for another, I thought Jacob might take better care of the birthright for Esau, than Esau for himself.

Yet I said enough to make the old man easy. And my aunt made no difficulty; she said she had liever it had been me, but she had read her daughter's heart.

And thus Owen and Cecilie solemnly pledged their troth, and we went to the French wars with a small band of retainers, and Peter the Wright as armourer,

reluctant enough to go, and declaring he went only to save English lives, not to slay French peasants.

One thing, I remember, woke me up with a pang of remorse before we left, and that was the pale, careworn face of our little sister Elaine.

The week before we left I found her weeping alone in the chapel by the river. She, usually so patient, sobbed like an unreasonable child.

"Brother! brother Percival!" she cried. "Could not the good God take my life? What is life without thee?"

And looking, I saw that the sorrow in her face was not as the sudden overflow of a tempest, but as the furrows worn by a winter's rains. "Brother," she said, "you will care for every one but yourself, and they will let you die. And in all the world there is no one like you, for me or for any one, if they only knew it as I know—as I know." And she sobbed passionately. And I, buried in my own loss—God forgive me!—did not guess that she, having guessed it, was grieving, not for her sorrow, but for mine.

And I remember a fearful feeling of perverse recoil from her affection seized me, like a demoniacal possession, as if she had in some dim, half-conscious way felt my secret, felt that the heart which had gone so wholly to Cecilie was rejected and thrown back again on itself, and might be hers again, hers more than ever, to bind up and solace. Poor, solitary child, whose beauty and whose sorrow it was that she must always be as a child!

And, with the irritable perversity of new grief, I recoiled from imagining that she imagined she or any one could ever fill the blank or heal the wound.

I should have loved Elaine and every one a hundredfold more if Cecilie had loved me. The few scattered embers of that hearth-fire had been warmer than the whole fire could ever be now. It was my heart itself, not a dream of delight, that had died in losing her. And the child's tenderness was a jar and a pain to me, until I saw that the poor crumbs I had left for her made her glad; and then the timid, silent affection, almost like a dog's, crept slowly into my heart and shed a little autumnal warmth there.

And the joy of giving happiness woke once more, and I began to live again; and I promised her, when we went to the wars, to try hard to live, which I had not hitherto meant.

But as I promised it, I did mean it, and almost began to wish it once more. For else, what would the poor little sister do?

So the battle was won; but the land was not yet conquered.

I had accepted my fate and resigned my life.

I was driven back into my place, to take care of the rest.

I made no vows, but I knew as well as if I had spoken them that love and the joy of marriage were for ever behind me. *Behind* me, not *below* me. I never deluded myself with that dream. Above all I could

vow or dream would have been that double life of love and care, feeding the sacred flocks together.

Above all I could aspire to, but also surely as far above the life Owen could give her.

If she had rejected him, he would have solaced himself so easily, would have entered so gaily, without a pang, into my joy, would have won, and perhaps broken, so many hearts, and at last been won by one whom he (with full conviction) would have charmed into the persuasion she was the first he had ever truly loved!

And Cecilie, would the heart she had won be true to her, true from its lightest surface ripple to its deepest depths, with a constancy such as a heart like hers deserved and needed?

And if not, if such a dire possibility of change, so probable, came to be, would it not be something for her to have a heart that *could* not change to her, that would find its bliss in binding up the wounds of hers? Folly! —folly and treachery even in the momentary thought!

Because her heart was of that unchangeable slow kind, like mine, there was no solace, no second love possible to her.

And therefore the only way to serve Cecilie was to serve Owen, to love and guard and watch over him, and help him to be his best, to be the Owen she dreamed and loved, who must be the true, possible Owen, since she so loved him, for she was too true to love anything but truth; and therefore her dream of him was the truth, a divine dream, a vision of the Owen who was to be— whom, so help me God, I would help him to be.

VII.

Percival's Story Continued.

AND so we went forth, Owen and I, and our little band of retainers, men-at-arms, and archers, to join the armies of England, to swell the tide which for nearly a hundred years had been dashing on the shores of France.

It is something to be swept out from our little rills and our rivers into such a tide, to feel the thrill of national life, even though it be through the shock of encounter with a foe.

We did not question much for whom or what we fought. We went as Englishmen against the French. Three centuries before, a few thousand Frenchmen from Normandy had conquered England. We went back to conquer France, partly as descendants of Normans and Angevins, to possess our fathers' lands, partly as descendants of the Saxons, to avenge our fathers' wrongs; but chiefly, as a matter of course, because England was at war with France, because our great king Henry the Fifth, a few years since, dying in the full flood of

conquest, had left on England a necessity of continuing his victories.

To fight the French was as natural and necessary to us as to fight the weeds that struggled with our crops, the winds that battled with our ships; as to fight heresy or rebellion, or the world, the flesh, and the devil, or any foe which endangered our life.

We went to mass before we sailed; we went to mass the first possible moment after we landed. We were as sure we were fighting with God on our side as if we had been defending Cecilie and Elaine from pirates in the old castle by the Western sea.

And, moreover, had not the God of Battles plainly declared Himself on our side?

Since the great battle of Agincourt, where our brave archers, under Henry the King, had broken down the chivalry of France, there had been the great battle of Verneuil, and countless other small skirmishes, so that the terror of us was on all the land, and ten thousand would flee at the rebuke of one. Besides, was not France our own? our dead king's, by right of conquest and marriage with Katharine? our child-king's by right of inheritance?

We were but deliverers (of France herself, if she could see it); deliverers from weak and wicked princes and queens, who assassinated each other, and left the people to perish.

What indeed was France but a name? One portion of it was Burgundian; more than half was already English: Normandy, and Paris, and Guienne, and Aqui-

taine. A few more blows, and the work would be done, and that distracted land would be ruled from Westminster.

We landed in Normandy full of hope and courage. It was meet we should have our share in our country's conflict.

And yet a misgiving came on me for a moment the first day we landed. We were marching through a ruined village. There was silence in the fields, as if it had been Sunday and all the people at mass; but the little church was burned, and the cottages black and charred, and we saw no one but a little boy drawing water at the village well.

And he tried to fly, but was detained by our thirsty men, and made to fill his pitcher again and again.

He answered nothing to their rough but not unkindly jests, only stared, with eyes starting out of his head with terror.

But when I said a few words to him in French the strained features relaxed, and he burst into tears and caught hold of my clothes and entreated me to save him, in my mother's tongue, in accents which I had heard last from her lips.

While the men were halting for a brief rest, I went off with the little lad and saw him safe to a little wooded hollow, quiet and pleasant, like the valley of Danescombe. And there I saw him welcomed and embraced and wept over by an old man and two frightened women, who took him into the shelter of a little half-

burned shed, which was all that remained of a large range of farm-buildings.

One tame old goat, the only remnant of the flocks and herds, was wandering about the ruins, and ran helplessly up to me, like a creature used to be caressed.

It was nothing compared to the horrors we saw day by day afterwards, but those were in the heat of combat, when our blood was up, and once more it became a duel between England and France; and that little lad, the old man, the frightened women, the solitary goat, broke up the picture from nations into individual men and women and little children of the same flesh and blood with ourselves.

And then, for me, there was the instinctive tenderness for the old mother-tongue.

It was a proud thing, nevertheless, to ride through the country whence the old conquerors had come, as conquerors and possessors, in our turn.

The cities were all ours, at all events, and English watchwords opened us all the gates and found us welcome in every garrisoned place.

Stately old cities, with churches like our own, built, many of them, by our forefathers.

We felt at home in these. Yet in truth we could not stir outside them without feeling we were in a land of strangers and foes, and that to us the cities were mere camps.

When the whole was ours, I thought, no doubt it would be different. Then the French would submit as

we had submitted, and we should be one nation. I said so one day to Peter the Wright, but he was very grim and not very hopeful.

"One nation," said he, "like the English! A nation of whom? Where are those old Normans and their language now? We are all English. Shall the end of all this waste of English blood be that we become Frenchmen, and talk through our noses, and scream at the top of our voices, like these poor ignorant creatures here? And meantime, what will England be?"

"The same as now," he added mournfully, answering himself. "Perhaps only the same as now. *You* see *English* and *French* everywhere, young master. Some of us see *peasant* and *noble* everywhere, and everywhere the nobles reaping the spoils and the peasants shedding their blood. For the nobles, jousts and feastings, ransoms taken or given. For the peasants, toil and sweat, and blood and fire, and no ransom and no quarter, and no pay. Little difference between France and England for us, little difference between peace and war. In peace we till your lands with the sweat of our brow; in war we feed your lands with our unheeded blood. But it cries to God from the dust," he concluded, "it cries to God!"

Thus it happened that many a misgiving came to me. It was so clear, moreover, that most of the men of gentle blood, such as ourselves, had come, not for England or for the King, but for plunder and for pelf.

Many a time the fruits of a battle won with precious

life-blood were lost, because the victors chose to disperse for plunder, sacking towns, or lading themselves with the poor treasures of the peasants—"murdered peasants," as Peter called them. It was hard to answer him.

But the war went on till scarce one province was left to the weak Dauphin, amusing himself all the while, we heard, among his courtiers in the Loire country, near Bourges.

If only this foolish France would wake and see the facts, and let us and our king have our rights, it might soon be over, I tried to think, and she at least be better ruled than now!

So the autumn and winter passed. Owen and I had won our spurs; and he at least was torn asunder by no scruples.

He went into battle as gay as if he rode to a tournament, and seemed to care as little about peril or death, or slaying, as if it had been a chase of wild boars by Tintagel.

It was fencing with a meaning, gambling for the highest stakes of life and death; it was a chase of the noblest game man can hunt.

In the battle itself, it was the same with me; and besides, there was always Owen to stand by, and many a time to rescue from some desperate peril. And between Owen and a thousand Frenchmen, of course there was no choice for me. There is, moreover, a fearful joy in the battle-field. The highest and the deepest, as well as the lowest and worst, are stirred within us. We were

meant to be warriors, if only it could be in the great knightly warfare for all the weak against all wrongs.

And surely, I thought, this war must be drawing to its close. The land could scarce bear much more wasting and depopulating.

Many of our marches lay through deserts, deserts which a few months before had been fruitful fields. We had to bring our food from afar, through the wasted corn-fields, and the meadows stripped of cattle, and the vineyards burned black.

And at length it seemed as if there were but one more stronghold to overcome.

Only Orleans! Only let Orleans be ours, and all was ours. The son of the French princess would be crowned at Rheims, the court of the Dauphin (so-called) would vanish like the spell-bound hall of idle enchantments it was, the war would be over, and France and England free.

Already our little besieging army of ten thousand were keeping the besieged within the walls of the city. Our forts and bastilles were encircling it. Already, of the three Furies whom Henry the Fifth called the three hand-maidens of war—fire, blood, and famine—famine, which he called the meekest, was threatening the citizens.

Already the citizens themselves had levelled the pleasant homesteads in the environs, laid waste the fields, burned the orchards, made a defensive girdle of ruin around them.

Who could say how soon, as at Rouen, the garrison might be driven to turn the women and children and old men outside the gates to perish under the walls between the two armies?

Willingly we obeyed the summons to join a company of sixteen hundred men-at-arms and archers who were to convoy some hundred carts of provisions (bread and wine, and also salt herrings, for it was Lent) to supply the besieging force.

We were but sixteen hundred. At a short distance from Orleans an army of six thousand came against us, Scots and Frenchmen. In those days (at least, so we boasted,) one Englishman never thought of fleeing from four Frenchmen, and these traitor Scots only put us more on our mettle.

Sir John Fastolfe made a fortification of his carts, and filled up the openings with archers.

The Scots came bravely against us, and fell by hundreds, smitten by the old English aim which won us Agincourt and so many a field.

Six hundred of them lay dead on the field around the waggons.

And as they lay dead, we felt a kind of pride in the old island which had brought forth these also.

And the Frenchmen fled. What were six thousand of these to as many hundreds of ours? And so the "Battle of the Herrings" was won, and our countrymen were provisioned, the little band of our countrymen. For when we came, the ten thousand besiegers were

reduced to three or four thousand; those of Burgundy had withdrawn, and none but Englishmen remained investing the place.

Better so, we thought in our confidence. The glory would be all ours, and the prize.

For already the town, hopeless of aid from her dauphin, who remained shut up in his castle at Chinon, had made offers of surrender.

The end seemed indeed drawing nigh;—when, suddenly, in the distance there began to be a low stirring of rumours, as when, under the summer sky, the leaves rustle before a thunderstorm.

A peasant-girl, a maid from the borders of Burgundy, had come clad in armour to the dauphin, to him they called the king, at Chinon, and had promised to save Orleans from the English, and to have him crowned in the great minster at Rheims.

We laughed in our forts and by the camp-fires over the childish dream. There had indeed been some prophecy, it was said, about France being lost by a wicked woman (such as Isabel the queen) and saved by a pure maiden.

Yet there was a secret terror underneath the laughter. For that there were sorcerers and sorceresses, every one knew.

Had not Eleanor Cobham, wife of the Duke of Gloucester, been condemned and compelled to do public penance in the streets of London for attempting magic against the young king's life?

Whatever was doubtful (and the Lollards and the evil lives of monk and friar had made much doubtful to many of us), no one had any doubt of witchcraft. And who could say what the devil (who must naturally hate England) might attempt, in the last resort against our arms, now that all honest means had failed?

There was not much leisure, however, for listening to rumours. The departure of the Burgundian allies had left double work on our men in guarding the forts and the bulwarks of earth which connected them. All the roads had to be guarded night and day, and also the river, lest provisions should be introduced into the city. And, moreover, new forts and bulwarks were being raised to make the encircling line of the siege complete. And those already erected near the river had also to be watched and defended against the rising of the water; for it was late in April, the spring rains had flooded the hill torrents at the sources of the river, and the Loire swept down in full stream, undermining her banks.

Gentle and simple, noble and peasant, man-at-arms and archer, had to work hard at the trenches and forts. Skill of hand and strength of arm, and the eye of the trained workman, such as Peter the Wright, came to be counted at their true value. The poverty which had compelled men to be powers themselves, and use their own hands and eyes, many a time had the lead of the riches which had enabled men to use the hands and eyes of others. Pride had many a blow, and the brotherhood of toil and peril brought us close to many we should

have known but afar off in days of peace. For, surely, something there is, in truth, in this terrible scourge of war, which smites nations into unity and compels prince and peer to remember they are first of all men.

We were resting together after a hard day's toil, Peter and Owen and I, when the first messenger came from the Maid—from Joan of Arc, the Maid.

The bearer was not recognized by our commander as an honourable envoy. He was received with insult, kept prisoner, and threatened to be burned as a sorcerer as soon as the decree could be obtained from the University of Paris.

But the words of the message speedily oozed out among the men in the forts and bulwarks.

It was meant as a message of peace, and was quite simply addressed to the King of England, the Earl of Suffolk, and all the lords and commanders, from "the Maid, sent hither from the King of Heaven." "She was ready to make peace," said the letter, "if we, lords, archers, and men-at-arms, would go home in God's name to our own country. If we would not go, will we, nill we, *she would make us go, for she came from God,* to drive out all those who did harm to the kingdom of France. If we did not obey, she and her men-at-arms would smite, and wound, and slay us, so that we should see who had the right to France, the God of heaven or we." "Not we," she said, "but Charles, the true heir, held the kingdom from the King of Heaven, son of St. Mary. She prayed us not to suffer ourselves to be de-

stroyed, but to listen and yield, and then to come in her company: *French and English Christians together, to do the noblest deeds for Christendom that had ever yet been done.*"

Together, all Christendom, all the Church, reconciled, repentant, rejoicing, Father Adam, Peter the Wright, the Popes, the Hussites, Lollards, friars, monks, princes, peasants, all together, to victory in some glorious war!

The captains swore at her and called her evil names, cowherd and harlot. The bearer of the message, as I said, was menaced with the stake.

But none the less the words of her message smote on many a conscience among us, kindling up the memory of deeds such as paralyze men to think of; setting many thinking fearfully of the homes they had left, and the homes they had ruined, and questioning why they had come.

There was much rough railing and jesting, as the men gathered around the fires to cook their rations. But the rudest words were not spoken by the commonalty.

"Cowherd, tavern-servant, peasant-wench," might be taunts from the lips of the nobles. They were no reproaches to the peasant-archers who had won so many a field, and remembered their wives and daughters at home.

And underneath all, like the rumble of an earthquake, kept recurring the old prophecy, "*A virgin from Burgundy shall trample the archers under foot.*"

I remember well one evening late in April, when

Owen and Peter and I were keeping guard, while the moon threw the long shadows of our forts, mingled with those of the towers and churches of Orleans, across the river and over the burnt-up and desolated plain

Owen had been scornfully echoing the scornful words of the men of our rank.

"She speaks like a queen," he said, "the peasant-wench. But madness, they say, in women, commonly takes the shape of vanity. No doubt she struts and preens herself like poor crazy Guinevere of Boscastle, who thought herself Queen Philippa, and made herself crowns of crows' feathers. They say she rides well, having learned by taking her master the innkeeper's horses to water. A merry jest she must make in the dauphin's court. But doubtless they are glad enough to take the help of any mad woman who will make their men fight. They say none of their own nobles believe in her, only those of the baser sort."

"Nothing new in that," growled Peter, "for apostle or prophet. And to me she seems more like a prophetess than a queen; a good maid! She is nothing but Joan the Maid, quoth she, a poor, good peasant-maid sent with a message from God to men. And not the first, Master Owen, not the first."

"A good maid?" laughed Owen. "Nay, either a crazy fool, or worse, a witch and a sorceress."

"They do say the young French queen, and the queen's mother, and all the noble ladies who have seen her, declare her to be a good maid," replied Peter stub-

bornly, as if he had been defending the good name of his own child. "And the priests and doctors say she is a good Christian; and she will not have any light woman in the army she leads. And on a pure maid and a good Christian the devil has no hold."

Owen turned fiercely on Peter.

"If she can bring mutiny and hesitation among us," he said, "Christian or not, she will do the devil's work well. She would not leave an Englishman in France. 'Get away to your little island,' says the insolent wench!"

"No bad fate for Englishmen to be sent back to England," retorted Peter, "to till our own fields instead of wasting these. And if it might be, if she spoke from Him she calls the King of Heaven," he added with a kindling eye, "what better message could she bring? 'Cease killing one another, and come and let us help each other to save Christendom together.'"

"Another crusade!" said Owen musingly. "There were some meaning in that."

"There are more crusades than that to Jerusalem, and other sepulchres besides the Holy Sepulchre," sighed Peter. "And a peasant-maid might well lead us on all to such a holy war."

Owen laughed sleepily, and wrapping himself in his cloak, said he would trust the watch to Peter and me.

We said no more, but I wondered if the talk between us were echoed elsewhere through the armies, English and French.

A deliverer whom the great ones laughed at, yet who gathered to herself the faith of the common people on both sides, on one side as a saint and saviour, on the other as a terrible sorceress or a mighty avenger, might do us more harm than all Burgundy and Spain turned against us.

For after all it was the common people, the English bowmen, who had won our French battles.

The next morning awoke us all to strange tidings. The Maid was actually on her way.

Some thousands of Frenchmen, with a convoy of provisions, had marched with her from Blois.

Before mid-day they reached Orleans, but on the opposite side to the city.

It was said the Maid had counselled the route on the same side of the Loire as the city, and was indignant at having been deceived and her message disobeyed.

We heard afterwards the whole story.

One of their greatest captains, Dunois, the Bastard of Orleans, came forth from the besieged city to meet her.

"Are you the Bastard of Orleans?" she said.

"Yes; and I rejoice at your coming."

She paid no heed to the greeting.

"Is it you," she said, "who gave counsel to make me come hither by this side of the river, and not straight, where Talbot and the English are?"

Dunois replied that he, and those wiser than he, had given this counsel, believing thus to do better and more safely.

"In the name of God," she said, "*the counsel of my King* (God, '*messire*') *is safer and wiser than yours.* You thought to deceive me, and you have been deceived yourselves. For I bring you better succour than any knight, town, or city whatever. And that is, the good pleasure of God, and the succour of the King of the Heavens. Not in any way for my sake. It proceeds purely from God, who, at the request of St. Louis and St. Charles the Great, has had pity on the town of Orleans, and willed not that the enemy should have the body of the Duke of Orleans and his town."

At that moment, as she spoke, it seemed as if a sign from heaven confirmed her words. The wind changed, so that the Orleans boats were able to convey the provisions she had brought across the river.

A new inspiration came at once over the city, and a new hesitation and caution seemed to creep over us. The city garrison made a sortie that evening and successfully kept at bay the only one of our forts which threatened the point of the river where the provisions were to cross.

Our own men were at once drawn in from an outlying fort, which was abandoned.

The French army had at once to retrace their steps to Blois, to return by the route the Maid had first counselled, which the captains had avoided. This grieved her much. The men of that little army had confessed and prayed, and with them, she said, she would have dared anything. "She had come, not to provision Orleans, but to save it." She sent her almoner and the

priests with the banner of the Crucifix back with them, while she herself remained.

But the winds and waters seemed to fight for her. The waters rose, the wind bore the provision boats safe across, and late in the evening the Maid herself, with two hundred lances, crossed the Loire.

At eight o'clock, in the dusk of the April evening, there was a great sound of rejoicing from the city—shouting, and singing, and glad pealing of bells, as around a victorious king. We saw also the flickering glare of the torches with which they welcomed her, reddening the sky above.

We knew well it was the Maid making her joyous entry. They welcomed her with rapture, "as if God Himself had descended amongst them," men, women, and children thronging and pressing around her to touch her clothes or the trappings of her white horse.

She led the multitude at once straight to the cathedral to give thanks to God, and then went with her own two young brothers, and the knights who had protected her from Vaucouleurs, and slept in the house of Jacques Bouchier, treasurer of the Duke of Orleans.

And then silence fell on the besieged city, a peaceful silence, as on a home to which the father and mother have come back.

"The whole people felt themselves," it was said, "altogether heartened afresh, as if the siege were already raised (*désassiégés*) by the Divine power that was felt to be in that simple maid."

We had none of us seen the Maid herself. But some of us felt as if a presence had come into the city which made it sacred and solemn as a cathedral; as if some supernatural influence had descended from sun or moon, or the heavenly places whence the seas are moved. And the tide had already turned.

VIII.

Percival's Story Continued.

IT was on the 30th of April 1429, the day after her entry into Orleans, that we first saw the Maid.

I saw her first as a messenger of peace, risking life and insult for a work of charity.

And from that day to this nothing could ever make me doubt that she was sent of God.

It was the last day of April.

I woke with a dim sense of being in the old garden of Danescombe Manor, as if the songs of blackbirds and thrushes were in the air, and the scent of spring in the thorn thicket, from the herb and flower borders in Cecilie's garden.

There was little enough to bear witness of spring in the wasted land around me then. Here and there a forlorn clipped tree, throwing out a little innocent touch of green amidst the charred vineyards, or some poor green twigs budding with fresh leaves on a felled trunk, like infants clasping a dead mother.

In our forts there was little stir.

Let our commanders scorn and rage as they would, the deadly life and movement of victorious war was passing from us.

There was no talk any more of fresh enterprises, only of defence and holding our own. No one spoke of defeat, but the whole attitude had changed. The people of Orleans were right. The mere entry of the Maid had raised the siege, and thenceforth it was they who were the besiegers, and we the besieged.

Once more the Maid sent us a summons of surrender, or rather an entreaty to yield to her King, her King and ours.

The assumption naturally made the English leaders, and all who disbelieved or wished to disbelieve in her furious.

The captains replied as before, with threats and insults.

They would burn her, make her burn and perish in the flames, the death of witches and heretics, they said.

They would have detained her envoys, refusing to treat with her as with an honourable enemy, save for Dunois' menace to repay any ill-treatment of these on the English prisoners taken the night before.

And they added scornfully that she was a low and worthless wench, and had best go back and herd her cows.

She felt these insults keenly.

She, the simple village-maiden, sheltered until a few weeks before at her father and mother's fireside, beloved and honoured by all the village, passing her time between

her prayers and the church, or in the field, and working by her mother's side, shrank from rude words even more than a great lady. For while pure in heart as a child, she had lived too close to the horrors of war and the rough, unveiled peasant-life, not to know what they meant.

Her father was a man to whom the honour of his child was as sacred as it could have been to any knightly house.

"Rather," he had said when first he had heard of her call to go to the king, "would he drown her with his own hand than let her go away unsheltered among the soldiers."

And the too-well understood words of public insult in face of hundreds of men who probably believed them, stung her like a poisoned barb.

But not for that would she lose one possible hope of reconciling and saving the foes who launched the insults. The attack was prepared, but she would not suffer it to begin before once more she had come in person to present the summons to surrender.

And thus it was that I first saw her. She came forward to the most advanced post of Orleans, on the bridge, near enough to our fort of Les Tourelles, on the opposite side, for us to hear her voice, and for her to hear the insults of the soldiers.

A young girl, little more than sixteen, younger than our Elaine or Cecilie.

I cannot explain the strange sense of strength and majesty that surrounded her.

In trying to recall that first vision of her, I find myself thinking of the armies of heaven that followed the King, "her King," on white horses, clothed with fine linen, white and clean, and of the "young men" (who were angels) "at the sepulchre in shining clothes." And I observe that others, in describing her, speak of her as arrayed all in white, which could not be literally true.

I suppose her steel armour glittered in the sun, and her white lily-bordered banner waved like a bright cloud above her, and the white horse she often rode made her as a bit of sunshine amidst the dark ranks around. But it was chiefly, I think, that she flashed on heart and conscience as something pure and heavenly, and through these on the sense.

There was no suggestion of weakness or feminine appeal about her.

The mercy in her was majestic, as the pity not of sympathetic weakness, but of succouring power.

She rode her charger with the quiet ease and power those noble, sympathetic creatures recognize. Joan and her horse were always of one mind.

And there she sate, as near as might be to our forts; and I heard her voice, deep and penetrating, but soft and feminine.

In simple words she summoned the commander, Glasdale, to surrender, offering safety of life and limb if he would abandon the fort; terms as from a conqueror to foes already vanquished, or rather as of a merciful sovereign, such as He from whom she believed herself sent, to rebels.

It was no wonder that to our captains and our army this demand seemed the insolence of madness.

We were victors, habituated to victory for years. A few days before, sixteen hundred of us had put six thousand to flight.

Our king had been accepted as his rightful heir by their king.

Their dauphin we believed not so much to be a dispossessed sovereign as the disowned son of a justly dishonoured mother, the wicked, adulterous, and murderous Queen Isabella. Nothing had happened to change the state of the war since our "victory of the Herrings" but the arrival of this one peasant-maid.

Glasdale replied with scorn and insults, calling her evil names, bidding her return to her cattle, and crying aloud that if he captured her he would have her burned alive.

She took these insults patiently, and made no reply but by telling us once more that "we should have to go." To Glasdale, indeed, she added, "Ye will go, but *thou wilt not see it.*"

And so, for that time, she returned to the city. She left a tumult of angry and mocking voices amongst us, raging at her insolence, her low birth, the ignorance and folly of her demands.

And yet, underneath all these angry words, *something* was left in the hearts and consciences of us all, that kept us, as if spell-bound, within our forts.

Panic, I know, has seized the bravest troops on the

battle-field, and shorn them of strength as Samson when Delilah cut off his locks.

But we were behind fortifications, we were used to victory. But yesterday we had pressed forth confidently to battle, as if it were but to take spoils already won.

And yet, when on the morrow morning Dunois and a few nobles whose ransoms had been worth us much, marched close under our forts on their way to bring back the army from Blois, it was enough that the Maid had come out with them and was between us and the city, to keep our commanders from making an attempt at injuring or capturing one of those Frenchmen as they rode haughtily past close under our guns. Having thus guarded the exit of the Bastard of Orleans and his little company by her mere presence, she returned to the city.

And there the people thronged around the house she sojourned in, so as well nigh to break the strong oaken doors.

She came forth, we were told, and rode through the streets, and there the crowds were so great she could scarcely pass on. "The people could not feast their eyes enough on the sight of her." Her gentle speech, her masterly management of her horse, her maidenly yet military carriage, delighted them. And she in simple words kept repeating, with the joyous ring of faith in her voice—

"My King has sent me to succour the good town of Orleans."

She led them to the churches to give thanks—to the

Church which from childhood had been the natural home of her heart and steps,—from the childhood she had scarcely left behind.

But still her purpose of reconciliation and mercy towards the foes of France, who were yet children of Christendom, was uppermost in her heart.

Once more that Sunday afternoon she went to the Croix Morin, near the city, on the opposite side from the fort of Les Tourelles, and near enough once more for her womanly voice to be heard, and for her to hear the insults sure to be showered on her in reply, and entreated the English captains to listen and surrender, and return to England.

There was still hope in her attitude and in the appeal of her tones.

We were all Christians. Might we not all yet, ere it was too late, turn from the malicious accuser who hates us all to the merciful King who loves us all, and join in a great work and warfare such as the Church has never yet seen?

But the old insults and defiances were, naturally enough, hurled against her again.

Scarcely deigning to address her, the Bastard of Granville cried to the soldiers with her, from our battlements—

"Would you have us, then, surrender to a woman?"

And amidst another storm of railing and mockery, she turned mournfully back to the city.

The gates were closed behind her, and from within

came solemnly on our ears the vesper-bells of the cathedral and the many churches, where she loved best to be.

It was May-day and Sunday, and I remember thinking how the bells were sounding from the little chapel in the hollow by the river across the valley of Danescombe, to the thorn thickets on the green slopes, where the white blossoms of the May were perhaps falling around Cecilie or Elaine, and breathing around them sweet airs of spring. Or perhaps, having more need of prayer and the shelter of sacred places since the brothers were away, they and old Margery had gone away to the village church, and were silently praying before the altar there.

Praying for us, that God would preserve our lives and give England victory and all the world peace.

Were Joan and the good sisters at home then praying against each other?

And was our Lord listening to one set of prayers and deaf to the other?

Or was he listening to all, and answering all in a way none of us expected or understood?

The great Father, with His children hating and misunderstanding each other, and He loving all!

The pitying Saviour, lifted up on the cross for us all, and drawing us all by ten thousand intertangled ways to Him!

Solemnly from the beleaguered city that Sunday night, that May-day, boomed the deep tones of the church bells across the blackened and wasted land, from

which breathed no sweet perfumes of spring, over which hovered no pleasant sounds of songs and twitterings of birds. The bells of prayer echoed back from the hostile walls of our forts.

Below, between the intervals of the bells, was the sound of the river sweeping over its sand-banks and around its islands, or dashing against the walls and forts which resisted its course.

And from time to time the challenges of the sentinels on the city walls and from our forts rang sharp through the quiet.

There seemed to me a dispirited listlessness among our hosts. The rage of angry defiance was over, and on Sunday evening the thoughts of the homes we had left, and the homes we had ruined, would steal over us.

As we walked round the ramparts, Owen and I, we came on Peter the Wright leaning against a parapet. He did not see us, and went on muttering to himself—

"'What doest thou here?' saith the Lord God; 'what doest thou here?' Lord, I know not. How can I tell? I came for the young men. I am not as the wind that moves, but as a drop of the helpless waves, the people who are moved whither the rulers will. The Maid is a good maid, I know, and if thou hast sent her, forgive us for fighting against her. For what can I do? Thou knowest I had liever be making benches beside my good wife and the sweet child Elaine. But the young men, my masters, are here. But if, indeed, the Maid is as an angel of thine, and yet we are, nevertheless, not to do

her bidding and go home, but to stay here and die, let us die into something better, and not worse; let us do good, and not harm to thy Kingdom by dying! For since I have seen this peasant-maid pleading for peace from thee, I begin to hope thy Kingdom may yet come."

Owen was very angry.

"It is as bad as a traitorous mine under our feet, an old grumbler like that," he said.

But I would not let him assail Peter, and we passed on without his heeding us.

That night I had a strange dream.

I saw the Maid in white raiment and shining armour, the moonlight shimmering on it, with a face that kept changing, yet was the same through all its changes, tender and pale as our mother's, beautiful and majestic as her Italian picture of the Mother of God, young and radiant and childlike as Cecilie's, and yet with a pain and pity underneath such as that on the brow of Elaine; her white banner in her hand—no weapon. But wherever its silvery light fell, bulwarks and forts melted like ice beneath it, and armies faded away like ghosts at dawn. And all our English host seemed turned into one long funeral procession.

And there were wailing and gnashing of teeth in our ranks, and among the foe Te Deums, and the Veni Creator, and Church canticles, and solemn pealing of bells, and joyous clangour of trumpets, though only in faint echoes, borne through the silent land of dreams.

Until, all at once, the white vision seemed to rise

higher, from an earthly height to a throne in the clouds, and the glorious warrior-maiden and her banner were mysteriously blended and lost in the vision of One as in our mother's crucifix, with arms outstretched to bless the world.

And from the bowed Head seemed to come not so much words, as a mighty attractive breath of invitation.

And the retreating funeral procession of the mourners and the dead turned towards Him, and the victorious hosts fell down before Him, and there were reconciling tears, and embraces, and confessions, before the cross.

And then, once again, the cross itself changed into the likeness of a crowned King, encircled by a glorious multitude of heavenly beings, reaching from heaven down to earth, and blending with dear, homely, and familiar faces, including not only Elaine and Cecilie, but Peter, and Margery, and the little frightened child we found at the well in the burned village; but all in one army, in one triumphal procession, moving onward and upward to some great conquest, perhaps of the Holy Sepulchre, perhaps of some lost sacred things nearer home.

What, I never knew, because the silence of the dream was broken by the sound of a clarion.

And when I woke, the last notes of the reveille were echoing across the river and the desolated plain.

IX.

Percival's Story Continued.

THE next day the wonderful week (it was but one week) which lost us Orleans and France began.

That Monday was a day of pause and of leisure, a holiday leisure in the city, as of a family joined after separation; amongst us, leisure dispirited and dumb, like that of a ship becalmed at sea.

The gates of Orleans were thrown open, as if the siege were already raised, and the Maid rode forth on her white horse surrounded by an eager crowd of citizens, armed and unarmed, feeling themselves secured, it seemed, by her mere presence, like children around a mother. They followed her through the fields by the river, under our forts, and all round the city, observing us fearlessly, as if we had been spell-bound inside our walls; which, indeed, it seemed as if we were.

For no shot from culverin, no dart slung from an arbalest, no arrow from an English bow was launched from our bulwarks.

It seemed as if the whole of the English force crouched,

powerless though observant, like some cowed beast under the spell they say there is in human eyes.

Angry and mocking, but immovable and grimly silent, our troops watched from earthwork, bastille, and parapet the grave yet eager troop on their long procession round the city.

In looking back, our inaction on that Monday is more marvellous to me than even what followed.

We were awaiting reinforcements, it is true; but so was Orleans. Except the two hundred who entered the city on Friday night with the Maid, many of whom had left again with Dunois on Sunday, no fresh troops were in the city.

Our habit of victory had not been broken.

Our commanders, Lord Talbot, the Earl of Salisbury, and the Earl of Suffolk, were brave and skilled as any we had ever known.

The Maid captured, or struck down by the unerring aim of our English bowmen, all was as before; we were on our unchecked path to the conquest of all France for England and our king.

And yet that day not a bow was drawn, not a hand was lifted; scarcely was a voice raised in insult against her.

Quietly and fearlessly as she and the crowd had left the city, they re-entered, the gates were closed, and the vesper bells from all the churches told us how the multitude were gathered in the dim aisles at prayer, around the Maid, as children around a mother's knee.

The next day, Tuesday, was again a day of absolute repose.

The city remained that day shut up in itself. It was the Festival of the Holy Cross, the Fête of the Cathedral, and all the bells pealed and clashed, and the streets were joyous, we knew, with processions.

The city was still besieged, no succour had come; but the Maid had come!

God, they felt, had sent the help. He was amongst them. There was no need for haste, no need to undervalue the powers banded against them. Certainly, the English were strong, brave, victorious, and well fortified. But there was no need to measure the forces, when on one side were right and God.

"It is like a miracle, that we are kept here doing nothing," I said to Owen and Peter.

And Owen said, chafing fiercely—

"If it *is* a miracle, it is a miracle of black magic. And such wicked spells must sooner or later be broken. But I see no miracle. The French have taken a little courage at last, and see how few we are. And we *are* few, and our commanders know it. No miracle if they wait for Sir John Fastolfe and his men!

But Peter said—

"It is the miracle of miracles, I think, to make men see things as they are. And if the Maid has done this, she has done wonders indeed. To open men's eyes to see the fountains in the wilderness, is as divine a work as to smite the fountains from the rock. To see things

as they are is the gift of seers; to make other men see them as they are is the work of prophets."

Before that evening closed reinforcements had come to Orleans from Gien, Chateau-Réynard, and Montargis—Montargis, which had resisted our assault two years before.

And once more a tumult of welcome echoed to us from within the city.

For to us, what did this mean, but that not only Orleans, but all the cities of France felt themselves *désassiégés?* that the land was once more theirs, not ours? that they were free to go and send hither and thither, whilst we were but a little band of aliens in a foreign land?

Yet, still, the army which had first accompanied the Maid up the wrong side of the Loire, and, in consequence of disobeying her lead, had been compelled to return to Blois, and cross by the bridge there, had not returned.

The Bastard of Orleans had gone to lead it back, but as yet there were no signs of its reappearance.

It was reported that the Maid was detested by the selfish, indolent courtiers who led the dauphin, and that the favourite La Trémouille and all who had been ruling the dauphin by what was meanest in him, were intriguing against the peasant-girl, and putting all possible delays and hindrances in her way.

If the French rejected Jeanne, surely it would be a sign that the Almighty abandoned France, and our conquest might yet be, whether for scourge or restoration, the will of God.

Up to that Tuesday night this hope still remained.

But on the Wednesday that hope passed away.

Tidings came at last that Dunois and the little army, though reduced already by the intrigues of the courtiers to half its numbers, was on its way, by the route Jeanne had ordered on the Friday before, through the Beauce, on the right side of the Loire, under our forts.

When she heard of their approach, the Maid came forth from the gates of Orleans, followed by La Hire and many others, and rode a league along the river to meet them.

Strange as it was, it was the simple fact that this peasant-girl, only a few months since spinning by her mother's hearth at Domremy, went forth to *guard* the army of succour past our forts. And she did it.

Our commanders suffered her to go forth with her little company, unchallenged, under our battlements, with her white standard in her hand.

And a short time afterwards she returned with the whole army, close beneath our forts, not so much in a military march as in a religious procession: the Maid with her lily banner, the banner of the Crucifix, and the priests in their white vestments, chanting the Veni Creator, and other Church canticles.

That day it was said there was an innocent exultation, like that of a happy child, about the Maid.

We were expecting Sir John Fastolfe with reinforcements. She playfully threatened Dunois that if he suffered them to arrive without letting her know he should lose his head.

Nevertheless, with a petty feeling of jealousy of seeming to let her rule, the French captains began the attack on our bastille of St. Loup, without telling the Maid.

Our three hundred men, though surprised without their captain, held the post gallantly. It commanded the road to Burgundy and the passage of the Loire, and was strongly fortified.

The Frenchmen were beaten back, many of them fell, and their wounded were being borne back to Orleans, when suddenly the Maid appeared riding swiftly.

She stopped as she met her wounded countrymen.

"Never could she see blood of a Frenchman shed," she said, "without her hair standing up on her head."

She had been resting, unarmed, on her bed, when "her heavenly counsel," she said, "told her to go against the English."

As she rose, the cry sounded through the streets that the French were being beaten back.

Indignant, she sent for her horse, was armed by the lady of the house and her daughter, mounted, had her standard handed to her through the window, galloped through the streets, so that "her horse's hoofs struck fire on the stones," and in a few minutes was on the edge of the fosse of our bastion.

Dunois and others followed her to sustain the attack. But she desired them rather to keep back and watch, lest the English should send succour from the other forts.

And so by her presence and their absence she gained the day.

For twice Lord Talbot sent reinforcements from the neighbouring forts.

And twice the besieged saw it from the great belfry, and gave warning in time to repulse the English succours by a sortie.

And so at last our gallant three hundred were dislodged, and killed or captured.

Among them were some Churchmen, who pleaded to be spared.

The Maid would not have any of the prisoners harmed.

"Enough blood had been shed," she said, "that day."

"She wept over the slain," her chaplain said, "thinking they had died without confession."

With her own people she felt the bond of flesh and blood, and her flesh quivered in sympathy. But with all men she felt the imperishable bond of soul and faith, of the Redeeming Blood shed for all.

She trembled to see the blood of a Frenchman. She wept over the unshriven souls of all.

And so once more the gates of Orleans shut in the Maid.

And from within, from every church tower, fell for the first time on our ears the triumphant peals of a French victory.

Te Deums were being sung there by rescued multitudes, kneeling with the Maid, their deliverer, before the altars.

And we were left defeated outside, with our brave three hundred dead and gone, and the fort so carefully

raised throwing the glare of its burning ruins on the river it had guarded.

The next day, Thursday, the Festival of the Ascension, dawned sadly enough for us.

In the city, still supposed to be besieged, the bells of all the churches called to mass, to joyous processions, to thanksgiving and prayer.

And yet, as we learned afterwards, that day was dedicated, by the Maid's entreaties, not only to thanksgiving and adoration, but to penitence and confession and amendment of life.

Their own vices, she said, and their own disorders, were their worst enemies, not the English.

She commanded that not a soldier should be suffered to fight on the morrow who had not confessed.

She insisted that no dissolute women should be tolerated among them, or God would suffer them to be defeated.

They were sad enough at all times, to me, in that war, the festivals of our religion; that common religion, which, nevertheless, did not keep us from burning each other's churches, and wasting and ruining life and more than life.

But that Ascension Day was a solemnity never to be forgotten.

"What does it all mean?" I remember saying to Peter, as he came from mass at an altar raised in the fields. "Is He ascended out of sight, out of hearing, whither we cannot come?"

"So I had thought," replied Peter, "too long, too long! But I begin to think once more, it is only our eyes that are holden and our ears that are dull of hearing, and that He is, indeed, still truly Messire and King."

"Messire and King of whom?" I said. "To the Maid and the French, King of loyal subjects? to us King of doomed rebels? Nay, that cannot be! What are Charles and Isabella and their sinful court that the King of Heaven should fight for them and against us?"

"I know not, Master Percival, that He is fighting against us," said Peter with a strange gentleness. "His rod as well as His staff may be for us. My eyes are very dazed still, but I think I begin to see men as trees walking."

And Peter relapsed into his habitual silence, and would say no more.

But to me that night of Ascension Day was a night of agony.

And once more before nightfall I saw the Maid as an angel of reconciliation and mercy.

This time she bound her summons to surrender round an arrow, and launched it amongst us, saying only—

"Read! These are tidings to you, men of England, who have no right in this kingdom of France. The King of Heaven orders by me that ye abandon your forts and go home to your own country. Otherwise I will cause you such a crash of ruin as shall be held in

perpetual remembrance. This I write to you for the third and last time, and I will never write to you again.

"JESUS MARIA, JEANNE LA PUCELLE.

"I would have sent you my letters more honourably, but you retain my heralds. You detain my herald Guyenne. Send him back to me, and I will send back to you some of your people taken in St. Loup, for they are not all dead."

The words were more peremptory than before, with less of hope in them. But still she meant them as a royal and Divine offer of mercy.

To our troops, however, they naturally seemed insolent beyond endurance, and they cried as they took up their arms—

"Here are news from the harlot of the Armagnacs."

She heard the dreadful word, her head drooped, and she wept bitterly, appealing for succour to the King of Heaven.

And that was the last we heard of peace from the Maid.

After that, we were ordered, Owen and I and Peter, into the Fort of Les Tourelles, on the opposite side of the river, where it was believed the brunt of to-morrow's battle would be.

It was sure to be the last night on earth for many in our ranks and theirs.

But that must be in all battles, and hope is mostly

stronger than fear; and hitherto our cause, to me, had seemed, if not the noblest one could fight for, still with so much right on our side, and so much wrong on the other, that I had trusted that the Almighty, who had willed we should be born English, would be content with our fighting as Englishmen.

Now, however, if in truth this peasant-girl, whom good women reverenced, whom captains and armies had to obey, whose presence was a wall of fire to those she came to succour and as a cloud of darkness to us; who fought against profanity and sin with Divine severity, and wept over suffering with Divine pity; if she was indeed inspired and sent of God, not only must our armies be defeated, but every blow we struck was against good and for evil, and each departing soul must enter as a rebel into the presence of the King.

So killing, and so dying, we might be exiled, not only from England, but from heaven, from God, and all good souls here or departed, for ever.

Yet, what escape was there for any of us?

The simple peasant-wit of Peter helped him.

"What it is *right* to do to-morrow, Master Percival?" in answer to me, he said. "To do what I have been doing ever since I came to this poor wasted, foolish country; to save as many lives of our own people as we can, and trust the Lord will forgive me if I have stumbled on the wrong side. To-morrow's work is clearer to me than most. For it will be a tug for life and death, and what I can do to take you and Master

Owen and myself back safe to the old home, to Mistress Elaine, and Cecilie, and my Margery, I will."

The attack did not begin that Friday until the morning was already advanced.

It was directed against Les Tourelles and the two other forts which commanded the bridge.

We knew afterwards that there had been hesitation in the enemy's councils, and attempts to deceive the Maid.

She crossed by the Isle St. Aignan, and the two boats moored together which joined it to the left shore.

The first attack on the Bastille des Augustins, which was farther from the river than Les Tourelles, was repulsed.

Once more, for the last time, we saw the familiar sight of a flying foe.

But our pursuit was checked by the Maid herself, who rallied the fugitives, and drove our people back.

That evening the Augustins was captured, and all of the little garrison who could not reach our fort of Les Tourelles were slain.

The Maid returned to pass the night in the city, not so much for shelter for herself, as we learned afterwards, as to defend Orleans against the half-hearted cowards who were for ever undermining her plans.

The next morning, early at dawn, she was at the gates, having heard mass, and ready for the combat. The governor of the city, by the orders of the captains, endeavoured to prevent her leaving.

"You are a wicked man," she said; "and whether it please you or not, the men-at-arms will pass, and win as they won yesterday."

The people and the soldiers stood by her, and she forced her way through the gates.

Yet all the time she knew, for she had predicted it to many who afterwards remembered, that she herself would be wounded severely in that day's battle.

All day, from six o'clock in the morning, the terrible assault went on, the French swarming up the walls and ladders, and our Englishmen defending with cannon and arrows, or beating them back one by one as they scaled the parapets, with axes and lances and leaden mallets.

The slaughter was great.

The Maid was in the thick of the danger with her banner.

In battle she always bore her banner, not her sword, for she never herself shed blood.

"Fear not," she kept saying, "the place is yours."

Still we held our own, when, at midday, the Maid herself descended into the fosse, and planted a ladder against the parapet.

Then she was struck by a dart from an arbalest.

It pierced through her neck and came out on the other side.

We saw her wounded, we heard her cry out with fear and pain, and burst into tears.

She minded the pain as Cecilie might, or Elaine, and she wept, not so much like a woman, as like a hurt

child unused to pain, or to concealment of what she felt.

So it seemed to me; and it touched me to the heart.

But, at once, with her own hands, she drew out the dart.

There was a moment of hope and triumph on our side, and of discouragement among the enemy.

They crowded around her. Some of the soldiers I heard counselling her to have the wound charmed.

But she refused, saying—

"*I would rather die than do anything I knew to be sin, and contrary to the will of God.*"

Then they bound up the wound with a compress of olive oil.

Afterwards I heard how she made one of her frequent shrifts (brief, and like a good child's, for the most part, I trow), and wept, and was comforted.

But we, seeing her go aside, and the chiefs crowding around her, and the pause and discouragement, began to take hope.

We breathed once more, for we thought the Maid was killed.

In truth, the day was all but lost for the French, and would have been lost from that moment, but for the heroism and faith of the simple weeping peasant-girl, the peasant-girl whose child-like hand touched the hand of God.

The chiefs insisted on abandoning the assault for the day, and retreating to the city.

But she went apart into a neighbouring vineyard to pray, and in a few minutes she reappeared on horseback, wounded as she was, with her banner in her hand, and said to a gentleman near her—

"Take heed when my banner touches the bulwark."

"Jeanne," he said in a few moments, "the end touches."

Then she exclaimed, "Enter! all is yours!"

And at once followed the rush and deadly confusion of the last assault, blood and fire and vapour of smoke, desperate grappling hand-to-hand, oaths and cries and curses and prayers.

The very sight of the Maid we had thought wounded to death, with her white banner, and the sound of her quiet, assured voice, struck a panic into our bravest.

Surely either heaven or hell was fighting visibly for France.

And against either what availed human force?

Still we held our own; there was no thought of surrender.

The last incident of the battle I remember was the death of our commander Glasdale.

He, with a number of English driven from the outlying bulwark, was crossing the end of the bridge to reach the Fort of Les Tourelles, when a boat full of combustibles dashed against the bridge and set it on fire, so that all our countrymen were plunged into the river.

The horror of the sudden catastrophe made a minute of silence.

And through the silence I heard once more the voice of the Maid, broken by tears, calling on all to save the drowning men.

"Glasdale, Glasdale," she said, "yield thee, yield thee to the King of Heaven. You called me harlot. I have great pity for your souls."

But there was no salvation out of that fire and blood.

And that night, of all the gallant company who fought through those two days of death, not one Englishman remained on the left bank of the river who was not killed or captured.

That Saturday night, for the agony of inward conflict of the previous night I had the anguish of wounds and thirst, of doubt as to my brother's fate, and of hearing in my few snatches of feverish sleep, as it were, my mother's voice and Cecilie's murmuring, "*Take care of Owen,*" and "*Why did you let him be wounded?*"

At last the darkness passed, and the dreadful dawn arose over the scene of ruin and slaughter.

Straining to listen if I could distinguish any familiar sound among the moans around, I caught at last a faint murmur of my own name.

It was the voice of my brother, and I thanked God.

Then I contrived to drag myself, before our captors were awake, to the place where Owen lay.

And so it came about that we had the mercy of being thrown into one prison, when, on the next day, we were driven across the roughly repaired bridge into Orleans.

But that Sunday evening, before we left the ruined fort, the fate of the city was finally decided, and the siege was raised.

Across the river, through one of the many breaches in the walls, we saw the whole English army ranged before the city, as if for an assault.

And between them and the gates came forth the garrison.

For a whole hour the French and English hosts faced each other.

The Maid was there.

An altar was raised, and two masses were celebrated before the troops.

The enemy, flushed with yesterday's success, were eager to attack.

Talbot and our countrymen stood ready for the fight.

But when the mass was finished, the Maid asked which way the English were facing.

It was replied, "Away from the city, towards Mehun."

"Then, in God's name," she said, "let them go. My King wills not that we fight them to-day."

And so, slowly and in perfect order, our little army went its way. We were but few, after all, and the first wonder was not that we had to raise the siege, but that we had ever maintained it.

Owen's wounds were more disabling than mine, and they let me carry him on my back across the broken bridge into the city.

As we stumbled along our melancholy journey, we

saw the citizens pouring out of every gate, pillaging and destroying the deserted forts and bulwarks which had cost us so many weary nights and days to build.

And from the dark cell where they had the mercy to leave me and Owen together alone, we heard the pealing of the bells and the feet of the crowds in the street overhead, as they went from church to church in solemn procession.

It was a strange time that May Sunday in the dark at Orleans, our first day of captivity.

It was like being in a tomb, buried, yet living; "free among the dead, as those that are wounded and lie in the grave."

Yet there was a strange sense of rest and calm.

The conflict of duties was over, and I was left once more to the simple, unperplexed charge which was so natural to me, the care of Owen, and that in its simplest form.

His chief wound was from a ball which had torn his right foot. There was nothing to be done but to bathe and cleanse the wound from splinters, and to leave it to heal itself with rest and time.

The danger was fever, aggravated by the bitter chafing of his spirit against what seemed to him the diabolical wrong of the English defeat.

At first he was very desponding, and sure he should never see England again, and gave me many pathetic messages.

But when the last bells had ceased to sound, and the

noises died away in the street above our cell, he said half shyly—

"Have you given up saying the evening prayers our mother used to say with us? I refused to say them with you once at the old home."

I knelt beside him, and he followed me like a penitent child in the familiar sacred words.

"I hope God will forgive me," he said at the end. "I cannot think of any trespasses against me to forgive. People have been very good to me. And, above all, thou, old man!" he added.

This was new from Owen, and made me feel some fear for his life. His own innocence in any contention was usually so clear to him.

And then, as I lay down beside him, this strange sense of rest and even of freedom came over me.

"Free among the dead."

It seemed as if I were not so much in the grave as in purgatory. Life all behind me, irrevocable, with its opportunities lost or used, and I, in the hand of God, in the fires of God, which are many, to be corrected and tried as He willed.

In this world no hope any more; ambition, love, all for ever behind me.

Yet nothing lost. The love denied, the love given, and, above all, the love loved, all working and burning on for ever; nothing to hope or fear for myself, yet thence deriving not despair, but an unspeakable solemn joy of liberty, as a creature that

has suddenly found wings and can soar into an infinite world.

The wings were only feeble beginnings as yet, and I certainly could not soar; but they were there, and the great world of God was there. He Himself was there, and the freedom and the wings, and all, were simply this new joy of helpless and entire abandonment to His will, as when after a conflict with breakers a boat is all at once launched with a steady wind on a calm and open sea.

Every person I had loved seemed nearer and dearer to me than ever, Elaine, Cecilie, England. All restless desire to change and remould had gone. I was in the current of the will that was swaying all; in the fire of the will that was trying and fusing and purifying all.

And through all shone that vision of the likeness of the Master in that peasant-maid—like a strong angel of mercy, entreating us to be reconciled; like a merciful angel of judgment with a flaming sword, smiting us back into the true path; like a trustful child bemoaning her wound to a father; like a virgin-martyr, refusing all relief at cost of right—"I had rather die than do anything I knew to be sin, or contrary to the will of God;" like a tender mother weeping over wounded Frenchmen and dead Englishmen, trying to save from death the foe whose insults had so smitten her.

I thanked God for the sight of her face and the sound of her voice. It made me able to lie still under His hand and in His fires. For in her I had seen a little nearer the likeness of the eternal Son.

For what she felt for France He felt for the world.

It was a rest to be there, though as in a sepulchre, and feel, with the whole city, under the wings of a mother bird, or borne on the mighty wings of a strong angel; though to us the passage to mercy lay through the flames.

It was but for a night.

Triumph was nothing to the Maid, save as a sign of victory of the cause she served; victory was little, save as a step to conquering the whole field, and saving the whole lost country.

And so, after her work of deliverance, which made her for ever the Maid of Orleans, she left the grateful crowds of simple, rescued people at once, and went back to the intriguing court, to encounter the half-hearted coldness, the jealous opposition, the treacherous flatterers there, and to vanquish all for France.

Only for that one night I lay, as it seemed, under the shelter of her presence, while she, doubtless, was sleeping the healthy peasant sleep, the sleep of a child whose last waking consciousness has been the Father's smile, the sleep of a mother with all her brood safe under her wings.

I also had the one of the flock given me to care for, close and safe beside me; and there was rest also in that.

Some shepherds have nations to guard and feed, some have a few sheep in the wilderness, one we believe has all those on earth; One, we know, has all the flocks in earth and heaven, and some have but one ewe lamb. Yet the habit and the heart of the shepherd are in their measure common to all.

X.

Peter the Wright's Story.

THE fort of Les Tourelles lay smouldering in ashes, deserted by English and French, when I began to wake up from the stun of the fall on the edge of the fosse where I had lain in the death-grapple with the Orleans soldier whose sword I had turned from the throat of my young master Owen.

All the living were gone, and I stumbled feebly with my benumbed limbs among the dead.

The first sound that roused me to the sense that I was still in the land of the living were the church bells from Orleans, all together, or at intervals, for vespers.

I knelt down and crossed myself, and said the Lord's Prayer, and thought of Margery and the little lady Elaine.

And next I thought of my young masters, and made up my mind that I must find them, slain or spared.

To this end I turned up one and another of the white, drawn faces, but no familiar face was among them, and the conviction grew on me that Sir Percival and Sir Owen were alive.

I crept slowly to the river, bathed the dreadful stains from hands and face, took some bread from my wallet, and sat down a minute to think.

It was so unusual to have no one but myself to serve.

The church bells still rang at intervals across the river.

How hateful those bells, and all the signs of what so many of us had felt that false and desecrated worship had been to me!

All we are meant to hate, pride and covetousness and lust and injustice and wrong, associated through the wicked lives of priest and friar with all we are meant to adore and love!

Lie and truth inextricably intertwined, and God far off on a judgment-seat in heaven, seeming to care for none of those things!

For it was not to have a mere pardon as a pass into some unknown country where things might be better which we peasants wanted; it was to have *this* world better, to have justice for wife and child, to have a kingdom of God here and now.

And now through a peasant-girl it seemed the King had once more appeared to set the world right.

The Book, the glorious Book of the good tidings was no more for me a dead record of things done in the beginning, but a living revelation of what is now and ever shall be; and this had come to me through a peasant-maid.

Kings and armies had to obey her. They could not protect her. She protected them.

They tried to deceive her, and were themselves deceived.

She cared for no honour from men. They had none to give her of the kind she prized.

She cared no more for glory or splendour than a child or an angel.

She cared only to succour and to save.

And this she wanted to do, and she would do, if men would let her, for England as well as France.

And this Maid, this messenger of God, they said, loved the sound of church bells, and delighted in prayer, and in the blessed sacraments.

She saw everywhere, not the soiled human hands, but the gifts they brought from God.

She sought Him, and she found Him.

From the cathedral, as I sate and listened, came the repeated strokes of the bell which told of the raising of the Host.

The Maid was there, in the city she had saved, among the soldiers she had taught to repent, joyfully adoring in the presence of God.

Weeping and wounded, but yesterday I heard her say, refusing to have her wound relieved by a mere charm—

"*I had rather die than sin.*"

Dreading sin more than death, this pure and strong child of God found a way to Him where I had seen only stumbling-blocks.

I knelt once more, and confessed my pride beside the humble gladness of this blessed one.

Then I rose and went to look for a little spring I knew in a vineyard near at hand. It was the vineyard, I believe, where the Maid had gone apart during the fight to pray, and whence she returned like an angel of victory.

When I reached the little arched well in the vineyard wall, and had stooped to drink, a faint moan came to me from the other side of the wall.

Rising and looking over, I saw a crouching human figure, or rather a heap of rags, against the opposite bank, half covered by a stream of hair, tangled and dishevelled, but fair as the lady Cecilie's, or as Margery's last babe who died when Master Percival was born.

The attitude was not so much of suffering as of forlorn despair.

On the arms, in which the face was hidden, were jewelled bracelets, and the soiled head-dress was of silk.

It was too plain what she was.

"Are you English, poor child?" I said.

There was no answer, and I repeated the question in such poor French as I had learned in the war.

"If you are French don't fear an old man."

"I am neither English nor French," was the moaning reply. "I am dust, to be trampled under foot. Let me be trampled into my dust. Let me die."

I had never many words when I most wanted them; but the girl's fair hair made me think of our lost babe, for whose death I had scarce yet been able to forgive God.

It flashed on me, some mothers' babes do more than die, they live to become such as this.

I could not leave her to perish.

I moved one hand gently from her face, and broke into it some of the crust of bread.

She looked up half-bewildered, not meeting my eyes; but something of command in my voice seemed to subdue her, and she ate a few bits, but with no human recognition, no pleased response, even such as a dog's, rather as water might swallow or fire burn what you laid on it.

Then she let her hand fall listlessly, and the rest of the bread drop from it crumbling.

I picked it up.

"Bread is precious," I said. "We may not soon find another crust."

I thought she might understand by the "we" she had a friend.

But she merely knelt down quite submissively, and gently gathered up all the crumbs and laid them in my hand.

The hands were capable brown peasant-hands used to work.

Clearly she would not accept the "we."

"*You* are not dust," she said; "you are a human creature. You must live."

"Child," I said, "you are a creature of God; you are a French peasant-girl, like Jeanne la Pucelle; *you* must live."

She rose with a great cry of anguish, and looked me full in the face, as if to repel scorn with indignation.

But I suppose the tears in my eyes touched her—they were stealing over my old cheeks—and she sank down at my feet, not now with a dry cry of despair, but sobbing like a child.

"Like Jeanne la Pucelle! la Pucelle! I played with her under the Ladies' Tree at Domremy. I saw her last Sunday like an angel, like the blessed Mary, and she drove me from the camp, from the town, she cast me out to be trodden under foot and perish."

"The blessed Lord would not have driven you away," I said. "He loved and pitied sinful women."

She rose on her knees, and, with her soiled, tear-stained face, she looked straight up in my eyes.

"He would," she said passionately,—"He *would*—for she did. And she is like Him. Whatever I may be, I know by something in me, she is like Him. I will never lose that. Even in hell I will not cease to feel that, and be glad of it. She did it because she pitied she had pity on France. She would die for France. And therefore she casts out such as me. For I am not only dust, I am poison. I am the pestilence. She did right. It was *love* that made her hate *me*."

The unveiled depth of her humiliation drew me down underneath her, and made me, old man as I was, kneel down beside and hide my face in my hands.

I prayed in English in my heart—

"Lord Christ, thou hast no outcasts. Thou sufferest such to be driven away, not to be trodden under foot, but to hide beside thine own feet, and bathe them with tears."

And then I rose, and said in a grave, quiet tone—

"Thou hast to do something harder than to be trodden under foot and die. Thou hast to turn back and live, and be good. And the Lord Christ and Jeanne la Pucelle will help thee."

"Be good?" she moaned.

"Yes," I said. "I will take thee back to thy father and mother, if they are in Barbary or in Germany or with the Grand Turk. And thou must let them chasten thee as they will."

"I have no father or mother," she said. "They died when I was a child—a good little child."

And with these words an accent of pity for herself came in place of the scorn. And she was beginning to weep again.

"Thou must not weep," I said. "There is no time. I must escape and hide myself and thee. Rise and wash thy face in the well, and bind up thy hair, and throw away these silken rags, and we will go. Thou must help me. I have no child, and thou hast no father, and I will take thee to my old wife Margery, and thou wilt be good. But now thou must wash thy face and help *me*, or they will kill me."

She gave one searching look in my face, then something like a smile, like a faint gray dawn of hope came into her eyes, which were blue, like our dead babe's, and she went and knelt beside the well and drank and bathed her face and hands, and bound up her long fair hair in a great coil around her head; and among the

slain I found a dark cloak, which she threw around her head and shoulders, and without another word she followed me across the fields, crouching under the walls and in the trenches, so as not to be observed.

That night we found an old ruined barn, about a league from Orleans, and in it some stray ears of corn. And the child made a fire on the ground and parched the ears of corn, and then she took my leathern bottle and brought water from a spring, and we ate and drank; and she made up a bed of dried straw and leaves for me. But I would not take it. I was used to camping out, and some one, I thought, should watch that night, and it were safest to be me. I was not yet sure if the despair might not come over her again if I let her out of sight, and she flee away to be trodden under foot and die.

So I bade her lie down on the bed of dead leaves.

And I knelt down to my prayers outside.

But in the silence I heard again the sound of suppressed sobs.

I went to her to wrap her up, as Margery and I used our babes.

"Good night," I said; "the Lord Christ sent La Pucelle to bring thee back to Him and make thee good."

But she would not be comforted.

"You are right," she murmured at last. "You think me too bad to pray."

If I had asked her I felt sure she would have felt herself too bad.

"Cannot you pray, my poor child?" I said.

"I never prayed by myself," she moaned. "I used to pray by my mother. And since, I forgot, or I didn't dare. But I thought, perhaps, if you would take me I might try and come back, I might say the old words with you."

My heart came into my throat for thankfulness.

Child that she was, she had taken me into her father and mother's place. She wanted to pray as in her childhood, in the old words, beside me.

"What were thy old words?" I said.

"Do not all Christians say the same?" she said.

And she said the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Hail Mary.

She said them in French, kneeling beside me.

"Do you understand?" I said. "'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive.'"

"*I* forgive? What is my forgiveness worth?" she said.

"Much," I said. "The world has been hard to you. You have much to forgive. Do you forgive?"

"All but one," she said in a low voice.

"You must forgive that one," I said.

No answer.

"Do you wish harm to that one?" I said.

"My wish could be nothing to him," she said; "he has forgotten me long ago, as a boy forgets a bird whose nest he has robbed, or whose wing he has broken with a stone. Ought I to wish him to be happy in cruel wrong?"

"No," I said; "you ought only to forgive as God forgives. He forgives, to make us good. You would wish no more nests to be robbed, no more helpless wings broken. Then pray for that. That he may be forgiven and good, as you wish to be."

"I will try," she said.

"And do you know what the Creed means by being crucified?" I said.

"Of course I have seen the Crucifix," she said. "La Pucelle has it on her banner. And around that she only suffers the soldiers to rally who have confessed and cast away their sins."

"It is worse than being trodden under foot," I said. "The Son of God bore that from us, and for us, to save us. That is what He means by loving, nothing short of that, by loving *you* and wanting you to be good. Do you think He will give it up?"

"I almost begin to hope not," she said.

And once more she lay down, wrapped up in the soldier's cloak.

As I left the barn to keep watch outside once more she recalled me.

"I was called Claudette at home, when there was a home," she said. "Will you say, Good night, Claudette?"

"Good night, Claudette," I said.

And when I looked in again she was breathing with the soft even breath of a child asleep.

And I, sitting down on a stone at the threshold, made my own prayer.

"O Mighty and Merciful and Wise," I said, "what sin has been like mine? For I have been angry with Thee. I have not forgiven Thee, not all these years, for taking away the babe, and for letting the world go wrong. And Thou didst but take the babe to Thy heaven, and sufferest me to lead this lost child back to Thee. And Thou hast sent the Maid to drive back this lost one to Thee, and to drive us straying Englishmen back to England, and Thy bewildered Christendom home to Thee."

XI.

Percival's Story.

ON Monday, the 8th of May 1429, in the chill and darkness of our prison we saw, through a little breathing slit in the wall, the reflection of the glittering armour and the white banners, we heard the sound of the trumpets, and from a church near at hand came the music of the canticles, and above, the eager trampling of many feet, and the joyous tumult of many voices, all gathered around the deliverer, the Maid.

"The Maid," that was her name. She was seldom called anything else

It was strange to hear all this exulting movement, and to see the flashing of the reflected sunshine on the wall of the cell, and we captive in the darkness, knowing it was May and sunshine outside.

To lie there a bound and fettered captive, and yet to find the captivity a liberation from the more galling fetters which had bound me to what seemed a duty, and yet a revolt against the will of God!

Easier, indeed, to have all His billows and waves go

over me bound thus to the rock of His will, than to have to swim vainly yet inevitably against the current of His will.

With Owen it was far otherwise.

And then, besides, for him, it was May in the world of his life.

Love and hope and Cecilie were in that world of sunshine outside.

And to him this defeat, with all its pain and humiliation and woe, made the earth seem like a kingdom of order confused into a chaos.

Rudely turned from his creed of England and success, Providence and magic and prayer and patriotism all seemed to him inextricably entangled.

"Listen to their screams," he said. "There is not one among them that can give a real cheer. Their very bells cannot ring out an honest peal like English bells. It is all clash and crash, and jar of separate, dissonant voices, and all, no doubt, like so many heathen idolaters worshipping that sorceress, kissing her bridle, pressing their sick to touch the hem of her garment. And she three months since keeping a few sheep, and spinning her poor peasant clothes in her father's hut! That is what the devil can give if only one gives oneself heartily to him."

"There is no degradation in keeping sheep," I said. "King David began with that, and with a few."

"For heaven's sake do not be moderate, Percival. It shoots through every fibre of my foot. If one cannot

swear a little, what is there left? They say this Jeanne like the rest calls us *godons*, because we swear pretty freely—that she will not suffer her soldiers to swear by anything more spiritual than their bâtons, the hypocrites! At all events, we English are no hypocrites. Neither the saints nor the devil can accuse us of that."

The tumult in the streets died away, and the long hours wore slowly on in the chill and the dusk.

Then we fell into talk about old times, and the boyish recollections roused him.

But it was naturally much more wearisome for him than for me.

He had so much more to be impatient for.

And he had no work or occupation; whereas he himself, his wound, his well-being, his fretting, his happiness, were full occupation for me.

And in this isolation it was a happiness to feel the ties of the old memories and the bond of brotherhood press closer.

He talked now and then of Cecilie; and that was hardest to me, because he spoke of her oftenest with a kind of playful protective fondness, as of a creature whose happiness was necessarily secured by having won him; as of a jewel, indeed, but one that was enriched by its setting; whereas to me, pagan idolater that I was, all the sky seemed but the setting to that one star.

He even compared her with other ladies, always to her advantage, it is true. If she was less brilliant than

such an one, she was more restful; if she was less courtly than another, she was fairer. Whereas, to me, to compare her with any besides was like taking a Madonna down from the altar to place it beside a Diana, or a dog. Diana or dog mattered little as to the irreverence of the comparison!

Cecilie was sacred. To displace her from her shrine was sacrilege.

He spoke even of the colour of her eyes and hair.

He thought them more beautiful than any he had seen.

But Cecilie was Cecilie to me; and thus to detach one part of her from another seemed like turning her into tapestry and cataloguing the stitches.

Yet he loved her truly; and his love and his character, *himself*, were what she has chosen.

If love, then, for him meant rather gathering her life into his, than giving himself to her, such giving was what *she chose*. And in the end, love being true, must for her and for him have its own double life, must, sooner or later, attain to its own essential life of sacrifice.

As we sate together there, my chief thought was how I could best help them.

The sense of having been lifted, or plunged, to a life beyond wants and fears, sometimes filled me with a strange glow of exultation.

But there was not much time for such thinking.

On the evening of that Monday we were roughly

summoned from our dungeon, to be taken to our final destination.

We had been captured by Sir Tanneguy du Châtel, a gentleman whose castle was on the borders of Lorraine, and there we were to be held in durance until we could be exchanged or ransomed.

It was humiliating to be driven past our own smouldering forts and bastions; but Owen's lameness and the difficulty of supporting him gave me little time for observation.

That night, when all was still, no enemy near, and therefore no watch, I heard a creeping and stirring, as of some wild animal in the long grass on the edge of the camp, near which we happened to be.

In another minute the familiar gray head of Peter appeared quite close at hand.

Owen, happily, was asleep.

Our colloquy was very brief.

I told him the name of the seigneur whose prisoners we were, and of his castle.

He said he felt sure of being able to reach the country still in English hands, and so, to get to the English coast.

I told him to spare no gold for Owen's ransom, and then, first I told to any human being, the purpose which had rapidly ripened in my own mind during our days in the cell in Orleans, that I meant to become either a monk or a priest, that all lands were henceforth the same to me, and that, therefore, I needed no ransom.

"All lands might be the same to Master Owen!" growled Peter; "but to *you* every stone and tree of the old place, every face in the old home, is dear."

"And will be eternally," I said. "And therefore I mean what I say. Owen is wounded, and will chafe himself to death if not soon set free."

A French soldier near us made an uneasy movement and murmur in his sleep, and Peter took warning and disappeared.

The next morning, when Owen awoke, he was greatly rejoiced to hear of Peter's projected journey home.

His spirits rose at once. He was sure Peter's will, so provokingly stubborn when it crossed one's own, would by the slow weight of it carry him through all opposition.

In a few weeks we should be free, this wretched net of sorcerers would be broken, the interrupted conquest would be resumed, and we should, after a brief final struggle, return with victorious spoils to Danescombe.

These fluttering transient hopes, which lure us on from bush to bush, hopping and chirping out of sight of difficulties, I suppose have their share in our training.

But the great immortal hope, which dares to look down into the darkness and evil and fathom it, because of the dawn which it sees from its mountain-height, is more.

And so we went to the castle on the edge of the forests and mountains of the Vosges, which was to be our prison.

It stood on a rocky height, and consisted of a heavy solid old keep, with a range of new buildings in a more modern style.

The keep was to be our prison. The newer buildings were the mansion of the châtelain and the fair young châtelaine.

Our first lodging was a cell with a slit for a window, which, nevertheless, was luxurious compared with our dungeon at Orleans, or, indeed, with many a monastic cell, because it let in sunshine and fresh air from the wide range of forest below. When we lay on the floor on the prisoners' straw beds, beautiful visions of stars crossed it, and of gold and crimson clouds at sunrise. And by climbing on the bench, which was our table, we could see the foldings of the wooded hills.

Our first solace there was a little child of seven years who came to see us, a child like the angel in the corner of our mother's Italian picture. Her eyes were of a limpid brown, such as I have seen in our moorland streams when they were perfectly clear and the sun struck them as they fell in heavy curves into a dark pool. How can any one call such eyes black?

Black is the death of every colour, while such eyes have in them the birth or possibility of every colour. The child's were not brilliant or sparkling, they were luminous, as with light from within; very grave, yet with a wonderful capability of gladness in them, something which was more than a smile, rather like the music of a child's laugh, sudden and spontaneous. Yet the usual

expression was of sadness, or rather of forlornness, of a sorrow which must, in some way, have belonged to humanity rather than to this little one, being far too ripe for the heart of a child.

At first she said scarcely anything, only brought us flowers in heaps, not in her hands, but in her arms.

Owen sang songs to her and made garlands for her, and she let him laugh and play with her, in her grave way. But it was curious that she always brought the flowers to me.

She spoke French, but with an accent which seemed foreign, though not English.

I was afraid to question her. The creature seemed so spiritual and grave, such a blending of child and angel, and withal of something which made me think of legends of water-sprites who yearn wistfully for human love and a human soul, that I had a vague fear she might vanish like a questioned ghost, if her nature were peered into.

To Owen, who plied her at first with many a merry riddle, she vouchsafed no information.

At last, one day she came without her flowers, looking strangely pale and languid, and seemed to yearn for some motherly arms to rest on. She let me take her on my knee, and soon the eyelids drooped, and the languid head sank on my shoulder, and she fell into an uneasy sleep.

An hour or two passed, and the dusk was falling, and I began to fear she would be missed, when the vesper bell woke her.

"You will be missed, little one," I said.

"There is no one to miss me," she said; "my grandfather is at the chase."

Just then the sound of horns and of the baying of dogs came echoing up the valley, and she sprang up hastily and crept away.

But at the door she turned, with a strange wistful look in her dark eyes.

"I shall come again," she said, smiling a strange little smile at me. "Never ask for me, but be sure I shall come again."

But, after that, day after day passed, and she never came. And all that time nothing varied the monotony of our days, and very weary they seemed.

"I had begun to think this cell might be a good novitiate for a monk's life," I said to Owen one day; "but I had not thought the monk's cell would be without the child."

We spent much time in speculating who our mysterious little guest could be, when, one morning early, when our morning portion was brought, with the old warder, who was the only member of the household we had seen, appeared a lady dressed in rich velvet and lace and jewels, but with her black hair falling loosely around her, a tall stately woman, with eyes like our little angel's in colour, and at first, I thought, in expression.

With a sweet graciousness, not, however, without a loftiness which marked the condescension she felt her visit to be, she said—

"My little daughter is ill, and moans for you; at least, for one of you. How shall I know which?"

"It must be my brother," I said; "he played and sang with her."

She hesitated a little.

"Excuse a sick child's illusions," she replied: "the little one said, 'L'infelice—the unhappy one; the one whose eyes understand mine.' Poor little one!" she smiled, "who has never known a care or a sorrow. You had better both come," she concluded.

And we followed her up the dark winding staircase of the keep across the halls of the newer mansion, through richly furnished room after room, which, to our eyes, so long used to bare stone walls, seemed sumptuous as a palace, until on a large bed, draped with crimson damask, we saw once more the lovely child's face.

She smiled sweetly, and stretched out her hands to us both; but she would not be content without my sitting on a chair by the bedside while she held my hand.

"I shall bring you flowers again, one day," she said. "I have told them, and they say I may, and now I shall get well."

She seemed quite content whilst I sate beside her, just as our mother used to be. A rest came into the wistful eyes. But I, who thought she was sealed for death and heaven, found it hard to keep back my tears so as to be calm—the very condition, I felt, of my remaining.

But the little maid was right. The flush and anxiety passed from her face, and she did get well.

It was a great mystery to me at first, how a child with a mother, and a mother so beautiful and gracious, could have that forlorn, orphaned look in her eyes.

It was only by slow degrees that the riddle read itself to me.

We were left much alone, we two.

Gracious and sweet as she appeared, the Lady Blanche du Châtel seemed to find an insupportable weariness in the slow monotonous hours by the sick-bed. She was always coming and going, at first on errands for the child, but, before long, going more than coming, so that the little one ceased to look for her.

Movement and change and homage were essential to her.

And so it came about that the child and I were left to each other, whilst Owen and the lady, with old Sir Tanneguy and the retainers and gentlemen who constituted the little court, were in the hall, or at the chase, or in the gardens. Everywhere to the Lady Blanche the world must be a little court, of which she was the centre. And so the child came to have the forlorn unmothered look, and the grave life apart.

The external likeness between the child and the mother was so great that it was some time before I unravelled the deep inward dissimilarity it veiled.

It is perplexing when kindred is thus in the outer shell and not at all in the inward organization.

For the outer shell of manner as well as of form were alike—the interest in those around, the love of beauty.

But in the child all these were the true end; in the mother they were the instruments to the one end of her own personal reign.

Not that she deliberately designed conquests, but she required subjects as instinctively as all human beings require bread.

In the child's eyes there was the wistful look as of a forlorn fairy creature yearning for human love and a human soul. In the Lady Blanche's eyes, of the same limpid luminous brown, there was at times a wild elfish spell, as of a being of another race set on exciting an affection she could not return.

The lady and Owen drew as naturally to each other as the child and I. Our captivity was virtually over, and, bound by our knightly word, we simply waited to be ransomed. At first I feared little for Owen in the matter. Knowing of old his own instinct of charming, I felt the combatants equally matched. At the bottom of his heart I felt sure there was the true loyal love to Cecilie, the inconstancy was merely on the surface.

Inconstancy in the depths was a thing I did not fear. It was inconceivable to me; like a doubt of immortality. To be the same being, and not love the old love, was, I thought, simply impossible.

And inconstancy to Cecilie was a double impossibility.

The lady needed a court. Owen needed an interest, and for the moment they suited each other.

But the combat was more unequal than I thought.

The Lady Blanche was of a culture and a beauty rare

anywhere; and, to us northern islanders, doubly perilous because of its novelty. Pallid, with a rich brown glow, for colour to compare with her you went, unconsciously, not to lilies and rosebuds, but to marbles and ivories and velvets, and all gorgeous things in king's palaces. Slow and languid in her ordinary movements, from the slow droop and lifting of the veined eyelids and dark lashes, to the gliding noiseless walk which scarcely made her silken robe rustle, there were yet in her eyes surprises of sudden fire, as if a hill covered with dovelike woods had for an instant poured from its heart a volume of flame; and at instants she had a swiftness of motion like a river falling with a smooth sudden flash from pool to pool.

And then the world she knew was so much larger and older than ours, that, although of the same age as ourselves, beside her we were like boys at school.

Florence and our western coasts were some centuries apart in those days, and the Lady Blanche was a Florentine.

Pictures such as made the one treasure of our childhood were familiar to her in palace and church as hawthorns or primroses to us.

Her own castle, which to us seemed so regal, to her was but as a salvage of a few fragments of the splendours she had lived amongst.

And as to books, though she did not care to read, the perfume of the Italian literature was on her.

She had lived familiarly by the sources of which our

poets had drawn. Dante and the primeval fountains were already voices out of the past to her, and Petrarch, with his smooth broad streams of classical eloquence, had reflected the life of her girlhood.

The insensible perfume of an ancient civilization was around her, and beside her we and ours seemed like children of the moors and forests.

She spoke with a condescending tolerance of France and Sir Tanneguy's château. What would she have thought of our old castle and the fishing-village, or even the manor and the abbey of Abbot's Weir?

So, at first unperceived by me, the silken fetters and the spells were woven around Owen, which made England seem to him as a foreign land.

My life also at this time led me somewhat apart from his.

Two things occupied me, the study for holy orders, and the companionship of the child Beatrice.

For at length I had communicated to Owen my intention to enter the priesthood, and the curé of Domremy helped me with my little beginnings of Latin.

And the child Beatrice and I had one great sympathy among the many things that made us friends.

She had conceived a great love and worship for Jeanne la Pucelle.

She alone of all in the castle.

And, indeed, with the Maid (is it not so with all the saints?) one of the most remarkable things was the way in which, like a touchstone, she tested the true and

simple from the false and artificial, the pure in purpose from those sunk in the illusions of self.

Old Sir Tanneguy had a certain chivalrous loyalty for her; he would suffer no light word to be spoken of her. Yet a certain aristocratic impatience of her peasant origin, with a masculine distrust of her military judgment, kept him cool.

But the Lady Blanche barely deigned to recognize her. It was too late, she thought, for Deborah or the Amazons, or, indeed, for St. Catherines or St. Ursulas, to be born, or probably for St. Catherine or St. Michael to interest themselves very vividly in terrestrial affairs.

Visions came in the night, or, at best, in the dusk of dawn.

No doubt the poor girl believed herself inspired. Such visionaries were not uncommon in convents, and Domremy was an ignorant and superstitious region, under the shadow of ancient forests.

And no doubt the court were glad enough to have any fancy or any standard round which France would rally to her king.

Also, no doubt, the stars had great influence. She believed learned astrologers had prophesied from remarkable conjunctions or appositions of the planets, that something marvellous might be looked for.

And thus, all these things working together, the influences of the stars, the weakness and the straits of the court, the misery and ignorance of the people, the visionary exaltations of the poor peasant-girl, the superstition

of the soldiery, French and English, this remarkable good fortune at the siege of Orleans, and also, probably, a certain fascination and ability in the Maid, who, she believed, was quite blameless and virtuous, there was nothing to be surprised at in the turn things had taken.

But, for her own part, she would certainly lend no countenance to such illusions.

She thought such fantastic fervours always led to reactions of cold.

And, moreover, she had no idea of people being lifted out of their places—a girl into a man's armour, a peasant to an establishment and attire fit for a countess.

At Owen's theory of magic or witchcraft she laughed.

She did not deny that magic was possible to those who had a profound knowledge of the occult powers of nature and of the stars. But there was plenty of range to explain everything connected with Jeanne on the ordinary human level, without bringing in either the saints or the devil.

She knew that the Bastard of Orleans and the young Duke d'Alençon thought much of her. But that proved little. Old captains and young princes of the blood, if you found the clue, could often be led as easily as children.

She also knew that Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris, and other theologians had sanctioned her mission. But she thought little of that. They were not men of the world. La Trémouille and the courtiers hated her; and she believed the Archbishop of Rheims,

Chancellor of the kingdom, and an astute politician, only half liked the whole thing, and would withdraw his support at the first seemly opportunity. Not that she blamed the Maid for that. Each must play his own game, and she had better look to hers.

The Maid had better be content with her fame, and retire on the royal gifts. She might become quite a person of importance at Domremy.

And by venturing more she risked all.

Risked all! What was the Lady Blanche's "all" to the Maid?

Jeanne's "all" was all God's will, the saving of all France.

But to explain this to the lady I should have needed a language far more incomprehensible to her than her sweet and smooth Italian was to me.

So the child and I kept our own counsel, and together, in our rambles through field and forest, gleaned what we could about the childhood and the home of the Maid.

XII.

Percival's Story Continued.

THE little homestead of Jeanne la Pucelle was standing unchanged in the village street of Domremy. Only last midsummer she had been going in and out of the cottage-door, no dreamer, always busy, chiefly near her mother, for she was the eldest daughter.

It was a marvellous interest for me—who had seen her as an Angel of Peace and an Angel of War, a whole city flocking around her feet as the sheep used to do in the village-pasture, secure in her mere presence, a victorious army spell-bound into inaction before her, a defeated nation enkindled into fearless valour by her—to come among these simple people who loved her, and to the homely places where she had lived as a child, where La Pucelle d'Orleans was known by a pet name as Jeannette Darc, or Romée.

The first time I saw her village it was evening, and the river was winding like a silver cord among the meadows. In "that valley of colours" the countless flowers of spring had not yet faded. From the meadows

the hill sloped up softly to the edge of the forest, divided into patches of corn and hemp-land or vineyard. Beyond, the forest of oak stretched to the hill-tops,—ancient oaks, such as ours in England.

The cottage was at the end of the village; the little farm of thirty acres was her mother's inheritance. It sloped from the quiet river up the hill to the edge of the forest.

The meadows by the river-side were common pasture. Sometimes Jeanne had taken her turn in guarding the village flocks and herds there. Sometimes she had helped her father with the plough or cart in the hemp-fields. Most of her time, as the eldest daughter, she had spent with her mother, preparing the family meals, washing, and often spinning, late into the night, to make the wool of their own flocks into clothing for her brothers and sisters.

Simple as the life was, it was full of the fountains of all poetry. And Jeanne had the opened eyes which see all the fountains.

God was in all things, to her, and therefore nothing was commonplace to her.

Love was in her heart to all creatures, therefore no creature was common or unclean to her. Moreover, having opened eyes, the range of the world open to her was not narrow.

War was there, with its terrible revelations of other lands and races, and its opening up of human life from its heights of sacrifice to its depths of humiliation and horror.

Once her family had had to fly from Domremy for some days to escape the soldiery; and often fugitives from ruined homes passed through the village.

Many a time the Maid gave up her bed in her sleeping-chamber with the one little square window which looked across her father's garden to the church, to some destitute wanderers, and passed the night by the chimney-corner of the dwelling-room outside.

And the dear animals were there to serve and be served, the poor mysterious creatures, so like us and so unlike us! She fed the calves, and milked the cows, and was recognized by the kind eyes of the gentle tame beasts, and even as a child felt herself a power to guard and guide the silly sheep and lambs.

There is wonderful teaching in all these things to those who can learn; not teaching they can utter in words, but which goes down into the inmost being and grows in spiritual bone and marrow.

And to her, her own peasant garments were no mere prosaic manufacture sold in stalls or streets at so much an ell. She had seen the wool shorn from the sheep and lambs,—the sheep dumb before her shearers; she had gathered the flax, when its blue flowering time had passed, and spun it by her mother's side. The symbols of this wonderful world were hidden from her by no vulgar artificial life. It is the factitious splendours that hide the beauty and the depths from us, not the lowly labours.

It was little to her that she could not read or write.

As she said to some divines who were catechizing her, "*Messire, my King has other books than those you wot of.*"

And then, quiet and peaceful as her little native valley of the Meuse was, her father's little farm of thirty acres touched on two worlds of mystery.

Their hemp-fields sloped up to the edge of the primeval oak-forest, to the Bois Chesnu, whose origin no man knew. And their little garden bordered on the cemetery close under the church.

As they say it is at Nazareth, the home of the Holy Childhood, and by the Sea of Galilee, the wilderness and the solitary place came close to the dwellings of men.

The peace of the flowery meadows, flooded and fed by the river every early spring, and the busy life of the tilled fields, touched close on the mystery of ancient forests, where a few minutes brought you into dusk and loneliness, out of the thought and sight of men. Mountains, and the sea, and forests, it seems to me, bring the unity and grandeur of God close to the little divided life of man.

And close to the little garden where she grew and gathered the herbs or flowers for festivals, lay the resting-place of the dead.

Not that I ever heard that this was much to Jeanne. She had not lost any dear to her. None had gone from her home to be laid under that turf.

And to her the departed were not there. They were in "the land of the living."

They were nearer to her in the church than in the churchyard; by the altar than by the grave.

The forest also brought to her the ghosts of the old Pagan Creed. The elves were believed still to dance under the Ladies' Tree (though Jeanne said she had never seen them). The sacred well of the ancient heathen tribes was still exorcised and blessed every spring.

And the curé taught her the legends of the Saints. Antioch and Syria and Alexandria and Egypt were household words to her through her own especial saints, Catherine of Alexandria and Margaret of Antioch. Even the names of Socrates and Plato came into her world, through the Virgin Egyptian Princess who learned that there was more wisdom in the Child Jesus than in all the grand old sages she had been taught to revere. The shadow of the old Roman Empire also fell on Jeanne through the Roman governor of Antioch who sentenced sweet St. Margaret to die. And the curé who taught her about the Saints taught her also the history of France.

To her, France was no mere piecing together of states and lordships. It was one sacred kingdom, it was one violated Fatherland, the heart of the holy kingdom of God. The king was the type of all royalty, the elect representative of "Messire" the King of the Heavens. From first to last, though she could bear in silence any insult uttered against herself, she would kindle and rise against any insult to her king.

She was beloved in her village as no egotist absorbed in his own dream was ever loved. Not a trace of the envy which besets small communities, when one rises above the hereditary level, seemed to cling about Jeanne, among her kindred and companions, so entirely unpretending had she been, never wanting anything for herself, always ready to succour all. To them she was, as they said, a "very good girl, simple, and pleasant, and sweet." She delighted, indeed, greatly to go to church, and sometimes they used to smile at her for being so very pious.

"She could spin," she said (almost her only boast at her trial), "as well as any woman in Rouen."

Flocks, and herds, and household cares could be intrusted to her. She would not let the creatures stray while she dreamed, or let the bread overbake, or the fire go out.

She was beautiful, and strong, and tall, with dark expressive eyes, a high forehead, small hands and feet; and she could run and dance as well as any, and weave garlands under the "Fair May" tree. As she grew older she did not care very much for games. But little was known in the village about her visions.

One boy remembered how, when he was a little child and sick, Jeanne had nursed him patiently and tenderly till he got well.

The bell-ringer could tell how she gave him once some little cakes (*lunes*) because he had forgotten to ring the church-bells which made her know the sacred hours

when to kneel and pray with other Christians, in the fields, and she wanted him never to forget again.

Church-bells were always a peculiar delight to her. And it was well for her. For the time came when for terrible months they were all the religious rites left to her, the only signs that linked her solitude to the Church Universal.

Another could remember her giving up her bed to some poor fugitive, and spending the night by the fire-side in the outer room.

All could recall her spinning and working by her mother's side, skilful at the distaff, no dreamer, busy and capable and strong. But the memories were chiefly of her love of prayer, and her readiness to help,—of little gifts and kindnesses and services, for Jeanne was one of those who, however poor, had always something to give.

Yet dearly as she loved the young girls her companions, and dearly as they loved her—Hauviette, who sometimes shared her bed in her little chamber, and wept so bitterly when she went away; Guillemette, and especially little Mengette, her pet and darling—they could none of them tell much about her visions and voices. She never prattled about her plans. She had the gift of silence. Her companions knew she delighted to be at church, and would often kneel in the fields "as if before God," and they had seen her often in tears at her devotions. Sometimes, boys and girls as they all were, they would laugh at her for being devout beyond her years. But she never justified herself by speaking

of her revelations; not even in confession, or to her parents.

Perhaps her reticence was inherited from her father, who loved her with that tender sternness of paternal love which would have made him drown her with his own hands rather than let her go forth unsheltered among the soldiers, and which afterwards, it is said, broke his heart, when she was put to death, so that he scarcely survived her. Whilst from her mother, Isabelle Romée, the peasant-heiress, perhaps came the fire, steady and glowing, which kept the mother's heart warm through twenty-five years of wrong and widowhood to right her daughter's memory at last.

It was from her mother she learned the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Hail Mary, besides all the unspoken sermons good daughters learn from good mothers.

It was afterwards, from the confessions wrung from her in the interrogations of the prosecution, that I learned how her "voices" came to her, and how, in the silence, her vocation deepened. It was afterwards that I learned the story of her visions and her voices.

It was drawn from her by the interrogations of the divines at Poitiers, and of her enemies at Rouen, and never varied.

She was thirteen years of age when she first heard a voice of God which called her. It was on a summer day, at noon, in the garden of her father, beside the church, on her right hand. "A great light came with it;" she "seldom heard the voice without the light."

The first time, she was "amazed and sore afraid." But she took courage and found the voice was "worthy." The third time, she knew it was the voice of an angel. Before long she found it was the Archangel Michael, mighty in battle, and guardian of France.

At first the only command was to be a good child and go often to church. Then he told her of the piteous state of the kingdom of France, and that one day she would have to go thither.

A multitude of angels were around him, and when they vanished she wept, and longed that they would take her with them. St. Michael told her that St. Catherine and St. Margaret would come and tell her what she should do. And they came: the virgin-martyrs whose stories, brought by the Crusaders from the mystic East, the curé had told her.

The light unfolded into glorious crowned faces and forms, the voices into a clear command. She was to go to France and save the kingdom.

The voices were very beautiful and sweet, "moult douces et belles." She oftenest spoke of them as "her voices." And thenceforth she dedicated herself in perpetual maidenhood to God. But still she told no one, until the hour had come.

But the misery of France deepened. The divisions spread; the Burgundians and English overran the land. Her king Charles was called in mockery "the king of Bourges."

The voices became clearer and more frequent, two or

three times a week, until at last they told her distinctly to go to Vaucouleurs, the nearest town in the valley, to the Captain Robert de Baudricourt, who would give her men to escort her to the king.

With the definite call came the terror. The joyful heavenly light and the beautiful sweet voices were driving her into the wilderness. The desert, in all its dearth and ruggedness, exile from mother, father, home, friends, lay before her; so that, "had it not been the will of God, she had rather have been torn by four horses than have gone forth to France."

But there was no doubt and no lingering. "She could no longer stay where she was."

The hour had come; and, as her first step, she went from home to stay with her uncle Durand Laxart, at the village of Burey-en-Vaux.

Perhaps she felt some inward sympathy with him. He was the first who believed in her visions.

After staying a week with him she told him the commands under which she believed she lay.

He was amazed; but she reminded him of the prophecy current in the district, that a young maiden from the Marches of Lorraine was to undo the mischief another woman (Isabella, the wicked queen-mother) had wrought.

He was moved by her conviction. He consented to take her to the Sieur de Baudricourt. This was in May: one of the Maid's four historic Mays—at Vaucouleurs, at Orleans, at Compiègne, and at Rouen.

The peasant-uncle led the peasant-girl, in her woven red woollen jacket, into the presence of the governor.

She knew the governor from others "by her voices."

She "came from the Lord," she said. "The kingdom belonged not to the dauphin but to the Lord, from whom the dauphin held it 'en commande;' that by mid-Lent deliverance would be brought to him, that the kingdom would be his, and that she herself would lead him to his consecration and crowning."

"Who is thy lord?" said the Sieur de Baudricourt.

"The King of Heaven," she said.

The governor considered her mad, and recommended her uncle to box her ears and take her back to her father.

Yet it is probable that even in that first interview she won, among the knights and soldiers who stood near, the first believers in her mission.

She returned to her parents, and from that time her father grew anxious and watched her, preferring her death to such dishonour as her going forth unsheltered to the army.

They tried to persuade her to marry.

But they dealt gently with her. Perhaps, all the time, her mother, who survived to clear her name to all the world, believed in her; perhaps even her father, whom afterwards her death brought to the grave, believed her, and *therefore* shrank and held her back. At last they suffered her to go and stay again with her Uncle Laxart, to take care of her aunt, who was ill.

She felt too surely that this was a farewell to her home. But she said so to no one.

Only afterwards she sent to beg her parents' pardon for departing without their leave.

Yet, she said, "had I had a hundred fathers and mothers, and been a king's daughter, I must have gone."

Her uncle took her again to Vaucouleurs. There she lived with the wife of a cartwright, called Henri le Royer. "A simple, good, gentle girl," he said; "helping his wife with the spinning and housework," and spending what time she could on her knees in prayer, especially at early mass and before the image of the Virgin and Child in the crypt under the church.

She was bound to a hard combat, she knew, and in the death-like shadows and silence of the crypt she gathered strength. What is all this earth but a crypt to those who have heard the heavenly voices and seen the glorious forms of the victors crowned?

Her mission was no secret now.

A young man-at-arms, Jean de Metz, who had no doubt seen her before the governor, came to speak with her.

"Ma mie," he said, "what are you doing here? Must the king be driven from the kingdom and we all become English?"

"I am come hither," she said, "to bid Robert de Baudricourt take me to the king. But he takes no heed of me or my words; and, nevertheless, before mid-Lent I must needs be before the king, though I should

wear out my legs to the knee. For none else in the world—kings, nor dukes, nor daughter of the King of Scots,* can recover the kingdom, and there is no help but in me. And certes, I had far rather spin beside my poor mother, for this is not my state of life; but I must needs go and do it, because my Lord wills it."

"Who is thy lord?" said Jean de Metz.

"He is God," she replied.

And he, brave and true, believed her, and placed his hands in hers, reverently as in a priest's or a feudal lord's, and swore that, God helping, he would take her to the king, "and when would she go?"

"Better now than to-morrow," she said. "Better to-morrow than the day after."

And thus the Maid enlisted the first soldier of the army wherewith she was to recover France. The second was Bertrand de Boulangy. Both revered her as a saint to the end, and said that an evil thought was impossible beside her.

The belief in her spread and deepened.

The Duke of Lorraine, who was ill, sent to seek her advice, as one endowed with supernatural power, and consulted her about his sickness. It is said she counselled him to amend his life, and to return to his good wife, from whom he was separated.

At length the governor, the Sieur de Baudricourt, had to listen. But, first, he brought a priest to exorcise her.

Jeanne was quite ready for the test; but she gently

* Charles had thought of flight to Scotland.

blamed, not the governor, but the curé. "He had confessed her," she said, "and he ought to have known better." To confess her, no doubt, was to justify her.

The cause of the Maid was won.

The whole of the little town contributed to her equipment, when she went forth, uniting their narrow means to buy her armour, helmet, hauberk, tunic, and all the military equipment it was thought right for her to wear.

One citizen joined with her uncle to buy her a horse.

The governor still delayed, but on the day when we English won our last victory, the "Battle of the Herrings," it is said she went to him once more, and said that the dauphin had sustained a great injury, and that in the name of God she must go.

"Go, then," he said at last, "and let what may come of it."

And so, with six men-at-arms, she went forth on her perilous way through the disordered land; and many of the people wept and followed her with supplications and benedictions, and with anxious care.

But she had no care. Her escort, she felt, was more than those six who were in sight. "Her brothers of Paradise were caring for her." And as she went she said, "It is for this that I was born."

XIII.

Elaine's Story.

IT was late in June when Peter the Wright came back to us.

He brought with him a young orphan girl from the north-eastern borders of France, near Burgundy, to be a daughter to his good wife Margery: a quiet, silent, helpful creature, with a grave sadness in the dark eyes and the pale face, and a hopeless yearning, as of a life in some way closed before it had opened.

At first Margery's welcome was not very cordial. But the gentle, broken-spirited creature by degrees stole into her place in the foster-mother's home and heart.

She seemed to have a thirst for work, as other young creatures for play. No threshold was so clean and no hearth so bright as Margery's. And into the church at all spare hours she used to creep, as a dog into the sunshine, or a sick child to its mother's knee.

From amusements she shrank. At first we sought to win her to join the young maidens of the manor and the village in dance and song, thinking it would, in time, make her feel less an orphan and an exile.

But though she would not seldom smile, and even now and then laugh amidst her work, an irrepressible sadness made her eyes fill and her lips quiver at any merry-making. Father Adam also, who confessed her, generally a friend to all healthful play for young creatures, said she were better left to herself.

Peter brought us sad tidings enough. My brothers in captivity, Owen wounded, the siege of Orleans raised, the armies of England, so long accustomed to victory, beaten back, our leaders captive and slain, and all through the magical arts of a young peasant-girl, whom rumour declared to be a sorceress, an unmaidenly creature going about with the soldiers, clothed in manly armour, in deadly league with Satan and all his hosts!

How else, every one said, could the soldiers of Henry V., the victors of Agincourt and Verneuil, the conquerors of Normandy and the better part of France, suddenly be checked, and baffled, and beaten, without an addition to the enemies' force save this one peasant-maid?

But sad as Peter's tidings were, he himself was not sad. A strange and unaccountable change had come over him. He was grave and silent indeed, as usual—more than usual; but all the restlessness and irritability had gone from his face and bearing, and at times there was an upward glance as of one who was not so much yearning as seeing. It was as if he had seen a vision of angels.

Peter went far oftener to the church, and his bearing towards Father Adam had greatly changed. Altogether,

there was a softness, and a peace, and a humbleness about him, as of one who abode under the shadow of some great presence.

Peter was never a man to be questioned. But to me his secret soon came out.

His Book, the Book, the English New Testament, was dearer to him than ever.

And from time to time he asked me to translate it for the orphan girl Claudette, to whom in his broken French he had told many stories from it.

In old days he used to make me choose the "woes" to the Pharisees and hypocrites, "Depart from me, ye cursed, in that ye did it not," and his dark eyes would kindle under his bushy white eyebrows, as he said, "Yes, He shall judge the world in righteousness. Only it is long in coming."

But now he chose the invitations—the "Come unto Me," the "Learn of Me," the "Follow Me."

At first I thought it was for the sake of the orphan girl who was wont to sit at my feet as I read, drinking in every syllable as if she feared to let fall a sacred drop of sacramental wine.

But one evening, as we sate under the old oak of his cottage-door, I saw such a look of adoration and joy come over the rugged face that I could not but speak.

"The Old Book is dearer than ever to thee," I said.

"The same as ever," he replied, "and yet altogether different, as the world is different if at sunrise you turn to the west or to the east.

"I used to have great pride in the woes to the Pharisees; for they, thought I, were the worldly priests and friars, and the covetous rich men.

"But I have found that the Pharisees were *me*, setting myself above others, and saying, 'I thank Thee I am not as these.'

"But chiefly it is because of this:

"The Book has ceased to be to me only a record of things that are past. It is a revelation of the things that always are.

"I thought it was a picture-book of olden times, and I find it a lifting up here and there of a veil over all times, from the beginning till to-day and for ever.

"It is as if you went into a great church full of what you thought were paintings on the windows, and all at once you found they were not paintings, but openings through glass, crystal-clear, into bits of a real world outside.

"Think of the difference.

"I see a picture of David, and the sheepfolds, and his smiting Goliath.

"I read of Moses bringing water from the rock.

"I read of the waves of the Red Sea standing up as a crystal wall for the passage of Israel.

"I read of the Apostles changed from trembling fugitives into men without fear, rejoicing to be beaten and suffer shame for Christ.

"I read of women turning to flight armies of the aliens.

"And all at once, looking out of one of these windows, I see David *there*, fresh from the sheepfolds, with the giant at his feet and the hosts fleeing.

"I see Moses *there*, the waves smitten back, the rock smitten into fountains.

"I see victorious armies kept back as by walls of sea, or of fire; hunted hares turned into heroes, by the presence of one poor weak woman.

"More, unspeakably more! I see the Image of the Lord Christ there, not in stone or wood, or dead on a cross, but pleading for reconciliation at the risk of death, driving away sinful women and smiting sinful men into virtue by a purity their consciences acknowledge, protecting a whole city by a 'fear not,' and all in the likeness of a humble peasant-girl, who confesses her sins like any of us, and says always, 'I am nothing, but I come from Messire, my King.'

"My King; yes, her King and ours.

"No more a King far off in Galilee, or far up in the clouds, but here.

"I have seen—I have seen the burned villages, the wasted fields, the murdered women and children. For we did evil in France; we wrought ruin. But now, it is no more only God in Judea, Christ in Galilee, or in Heaven; but Christ in France, at Orleans, this May day, and we all *in* His kingdom, as much those of us He rebukes and repels as those He sustains and succours."

"You speak in parables, Peter," I said.

"No parables, mistress," he said. "I speak of Joan the Maid."

And then he told me all the wonderful story, and I could not but wonder and believe.

"But," I said, "what joy for *us* in this? If the Maid is from God, God is against England, and we are lost rebels, enemies of Heaven."

"God is against us," he said, "as a man against the son whom he loveth and chasteneth. He *chasteneth*. That means, His own hand is on us, and that being true, what does the pain matter, or the blows? It is His hand, the Father's! And I had thought, I had moaned, that He had left the world alone."

"What does Percival think?" I asked.

"Sir Percival does not so much *think*," Peter replied. "He has opened his eyes and he *sees*."

"And Owen?" I said.

"Sir Owen thinks as the majority do," Peter replied.

"If this be so," I said, "the French prison is more freedom to Percival than the English camp."

And then the old man told me what Percival had told him that night near Orleans.

And I was sad: not so much that Percival should be a priest, as for that he had said that to him all lands were alike. Whilst to me all lands would indeed have been alike, but only *with* him—or, alas! without him.

Were we, was Cecilie, was I nothing to him?

But Peter, answering, I suppose, the quiver of pain on my face, said,—

"He did but mean to make his ransoming seem of no moment, that all might be spent on Sir Owen."

And when, that night, as Cecilie and I in our little chamber looked out for a last sight of the starry sky through the window, round which the honeysuckle Percival had planted was climbing, and I told her all, she also said—

"He did but mean we should spend all we could gather for Owen."

"Ransom Owen," I said, "and let Percival be a prisoner and an exile?"

She looked up as if quite surprised at my objection.

"Percival would think it quite natural and necessary," she said.

To her also, then, it seemed quite natural that Percival's life, or mine, or the whole world's should be poured out in ransom for Owen's, melted like one pearl to enrich the wine-cup of his festive life!

But what if Percival were, as he was to me, the one precious pearl, and Owen's life the lavish wine to dissolve it, and be no better for the waste?

Yet in one sense she was right, this sacrifice was natural in the heavenly kingdom.

In the lower kingdom the lower feeds the higher.

In the higher, the higher is sacrificed to the lower.

The mother for the child, the Christ for the lost, God for man.

Not by any paradox, but by high necessity, because

in the true life, which is love, gain is not in getting, but in giving.

Breathing is burning. Growing is expending. Dying is the seed bursting the prison of the husk.

Selfishness being death, losing self is life.

Sacrifice is not a purchase of immunity from sacrifice; —it is fire, it is liberty, it is life; it is all natural in the life of love.

And every day I had prayed beside our mother's crucifix; and every day I was present at the feast which is a sacrifice, at the perpetual sacrifice which is the perpetual feast.

And yet I had been so slow to learn this, especially for Percival!

I chafed and grudged that he, the eldest and the best, should be sacrificed to the youngest and the least worthy; that the fullest love, the richest cup, should be Owen's; the old lands, Cecilie's love, the future of the family; while Percival, impoverished, exiled, contentedly abandoned to his sacrifice, should have nothing left to give but himself.

So little did I know what riches and poverty were, or what love means.

But every one acquiesced, easily enough. Our aunt and Sir Richard also thought it quite natural that their future son-in-law should be considered before Percival; and if Percival had indeed a vocation to the priesthood, what could be more convenient and fortunate, and make everything fit in better for every one?

And so we all gave up what we could; Cecilie every one of her girlish trinkets and jewels; all of us lands in mortgage, and whatever luxuries could be spared.

And by degrees the ransom was being raised; and in a few weeks, every one trusted, Peter would go back to France, find out the castle where my brothers were in captivity; and Owen, no doubt, with the stipulation he was not to fight against the French, would be restored to home and Cecilie—his home, his castle, his lands, his bride.

And Percival?

He might live for God in some foreign monastery.

And I?

I might die. And before long every one would die, and then all things would, no doubt, be set right.

XIV.

Percival's Story.

AT last a cold fear began to creep over me that the spell of the Lady Blanche's beauty and grace was wrapping Owen, like the knights in the legends, in an enchantment which would make all common life and dear familiar home delights tame and cold to him.

The lady taught him Italian. She said he was too gentle and courteous for those northern island deserts. He should go and take service in Italy, where foreign soldiers of valour and conduct would always make their mark.

It was long since we had spoken much of home; the present brought such a bewildering dazzle of changing pleasures and contrasts; the gay parties at the chase, or the more perilous fascination of the lessons in the castle.

At length one day a pedlar came to the castle, with a pack of draperies and luxuries for the ladies. His attention seemed fixed in a peculiar manner on Owen and me. At first he seemed to waver between us. But at last, unable to attract Owen, who was occupied in assisting the Lady Blanche to some momentous decision between

gold and silver embroidery, he directed his efforts to me, and slipped a packet into my hand, saying in broken English, "It is for the brother with the dark eyes—no one but him. Give me a token to say to those who sent me I have been faithful to my trust."

A ring of Owen's lay on the table; he had been thinking of exchanging it. I took it hastily, having not a moment for thought, and gave it to the man.

In a short time the pedlar departed, declaring he had a long journey before him and could not delay.

When Owen and I were alone, I gave him the packet.

He changed colour; not flushing, but growing for a moment, it seemed to me, gray and old, as he read the letter.

"It is to say they will soon send the ransom by Peter," he said, and then he fell into a muse.

"It is perplexing," he said at last, tossing back his hair. "I had thought ransom was impossible, and I was half thinking of abandoning the war and going to serve in Italy, which I may do, I believe, when I like, without ransom."

I was dumb.

"You could not but be glad I should abandon this war," he resumed, almost fretfully, "believing as you and Peter seem to do, that this peasant-maid is as an angel of God."

"To abandon the war is one thing," I replied; "but to abandon England, and home, and—"

"I abandon nothing and no one," he interrupted me

hastily. "Of course, Italy was only to be on the way home; a little way round." And he would say no more.

That night I had my last inward conflict, on that ground, concerning Cecilie.

He had her dear writing; she was no great scholar; and I had seen the precious half-childish letters I knew so well.

And to him they seemed not as the blessed, inspiring, liberating touch of her kind hand, but as a fetter.

Could it be possible that for his sake and Cecilie's, still to "take care of him" and of her, I might yet have to put away the knife and the fire from my own heart, to find that the offering had been accepted, and that from the heavens came a voice bidding me *not* to take the knife or kindle the fire, but to let things be; to wait and watch; and that the best for Cecilie—even for Owen—might even yet be a rapture of fulfilled joy for me?

To pour out all the oil of our lamp of life to feed the flame of another life may be worth while; but to pour it into a broken vessel simply to be wasted!

In loving, we can only really love what really exists. If what Cecilie loved proved a dream, then she must have been dreaming in so loving, and any waking, though it might be through anguish, was better than dreaming.

Might not the true life for her, as for me, yet be, "*together* to take care of him"?

There is no mating for creatures really of different race. Were not Owen and Cecilie really creatures of

different spiritual race, and might not this lady and Owen, charming, delighting, deceiving, undeceiving, trying, tormenting each other as they surely would, be really a truer whole, fitting in as broken fragments into each other's characters?

But, thank God, weak as I was, I had lived too much in truth for that lie to live long in me.

Owen was Owen, and no dream; Cecilie was Cecilie, and her love was her very self, no dream; and to take care of Owen meant no love of a dream-Owen, however beautiful; no letting go of the real Owen into false and fairy enchantments, however sweet; but to save him, to rescue him, to win him to his true self for himself and Cecilie.

And rising from vain tossing on my bed, once more that night I took in spirit my mother's hand, and promised to do her bidding.

And another mightier Hand held mine.

And so, the next morning I rose early and prayed for Owen as if he had been in a magician's cave, as he was. There was nothing else to be done.

And the next day a company of guests arrived, fresh from the battle of La Pataye, the first in which our England was defeated in the open field. And the Lady Blanche gleamed forth in all her charm and graciousness, shining equally on all. And for the moment the magician's cave was open to the daylight, and that evening Owen read those few precious lines of Cecilie's, which I never saw, again and again, and said—

"She is sweet and fresh as an English spring-flower —violet, primrose, hyacinth. When shall we breathe the dear familiar wholesome air again?"

These new guests were the three young Seigneurs de Mailly from the dauphin's court at Chinon,—and they had much to say about the Maid.

Of these three young seigneurs two were brothers, and the third was a cousin. They varied in their estimate of the Maid.

Sir Bertrand, the eldest, was a languid and polished courtier, well acquainted with the favourite, La Trémouille.

He saw of Jeanne about as much as the Lady Blanche could see, and greatly admired her insight and discrimination. He considered the Maid to be a half-mad enthusiast, of whom it might be expedient, for political reasons, to make use, because the common people believed in her, and would fight for her. But the less she could be listened to the better, and so much the sooner she could be thrown aside when the work was done. Beside her, there was no repose to be had. A victory, with her, meant not a resting-place for feasting and congratulations, but a step towards further battle and conquest; and if life were to be one series of enterprises and sacrifices, conquest and life itself he deemed were scarce worth having at the price.

The second brother was an active and able captain, and he asserted that whatever might be the source of her wisdom, the Maid had a marvellous capacity for war

—seizing the enemy's weak points, seeing at once the best routes to take, and the right moments for action or repose, with an insight which made her advice at the council as efficacious as her presence in the field; quick-sighted and keen-witted, with a calm courage and self-possession never disturbed.

The third seigneur was a simple and loyal young soldier, whose face lighted up whenever he spoke of the Maid. The general chill and carping criticism about her, in the castle, kept him usually silent; but one day I found the child Beatrice questioning him, with her searching eyes drinking in his words, and his eyes kindling and his voice deepening whilst he told her all he knew of Jeanne.

Like the young Seigneur Gui de Laval, in writing to his mother, he said it was "heavenly to be near her—so simple, so pious, so noble and gracious was she." "Her festivity was to go to church; and she made the camp as sacred as a church to some of us," he said, turning to me. "To fight under her banner was like fighting beside my own mother, and that means something, in a camp. It meant the difference between heaven and hell to me. Her goodness was not a bondage; she made us feel it freedom. She could be as playful as a good child. She would not suffer an oath in her hearing, but she permitted the veteran La Hire to soften the breaking of his inveterate habit by swearing 'by his bâton.'"

From this young soldier I first began fully to understand what a ceaseless conflict her life was, and how

tangled and thorny were the ways, to her, which from outside looked like a triumphal procession.

The first stage in her journey into "the wilderness" was the journey from Vaucouleurs to Chinon. By the end of the eleven days which this occupied, the six men-at-arms who escorted her had ceased to have any doubts as to her mission. Their way lay through a hostile country; she had no fear, and her only trouble was that it was not considered safe for her to attend mass daily in the churches.

At the end of those eleven days she arrived outside Chinon, and then began her ceaseless warfare with the selfishness and sloth which were the real ruin of France, —the ceaseless hostility which, though put down again and again, was never overcome, the jealousy and hatred of the worthless favourite La Trémouille, the cold-hearted Archbishop of Rheims, and all who loved their own ease, or their success at court, more than their country or duty.

The conflict began with their endeavouring to prevent her seeing the king. It ended by their preventing his lifting a finger to save her from the death of fire.

Their first point was to hinder her entering the castle.

But the city of Orleans, which in its sore distress had heard of the succour promised through her, sent a deputation to entreat the king to listen.

And her two first knightly friends, Jean de Metz and Bertrand de Boulangy, who had escorted her from

Vaucouleurs, bore such witness to her that this objection was overcome.

At her first interview, King Charles, to test her, pretended he was not the king. But she was not to be misled, and at once paid him royal honours.

Gradually the faith in her spread and deepened.

The monks who had been sent to inquire into her life at Domremy came back with a favourable report. Nothing but good was to be heard of her in her native valley.

Grave theologians questioned her, and great ladies came to see her. She met every one with the dignity and ease, the gaiety and sweetness natural to her. But in secret she wept and prayed much.

One thing at last greatly moved the king. He had doubts about his own birth and his right to the kingdom. These he had breathed to no one, but had laid especially in one solemn secret prayer before God.

This secret doubt and silent prayer the Maid met and answered by saying to him one day with an authority she never otherwise used in speaking to him, having the profoundest reverence for royalty. This once she used the unwonted "thou" to her sovereign. "Je te dis," she said, "de la part de Messire"—"I say to thee from my King, thou art the true heir of France and son of the king."

This was her *secret sign* to the king, as revealed afterwards, though never to be wrung from her by months of torturing cross-questioning.

After this he consented to her being subjected for three weeks to a sifting examination by various bishops and divines at Poitiers.

She told them of her visions and her voices; how they commanded her to go and help France, and in spite of her tears she had to obey and had come.

"Jeanne," said Guillaume Aymeri, at this examination, "you ask for men-at-arms, but if God wills that the English depart, there is no need for men-at-arms, since the will of God alone can discomfit them."

"In the name of God," she said, "the men-at-arms will do battle, and God will give the victory."

Then Séguin, a Dominican friar, who spoke the Limousin patois, "a very sour man," wanted her to tell what language her voices spoke.

"Better than yours," she replied.

He was aggrieved at this attack upon his language, and in retaliation questioned her faith.

"Do you believe in God?" he asked.

"More than you do," she said.

Then he retorted that he would give her no soldiers until she gave some sign of her mission.

"In the name of God," she replied, "I am not come to Poitiers to give a sign. But take me to Orleans, and I will show you the signs wherefore I was sent."

"There is more in the books of our Lord than in your books," she said.

The nobleness of Séguin triumphed over his temper, and he himself reported this against himself.

The examination at Poitiers lasted three weeks, and all the time her conduct was continually watched.

The result was that the divines pronounced decidedly for her; the captains marvelled at her aptitude for war; the good Queen Yolande, and all noble matrons and maidens who learned to know her, delighted in her simplicity, modesty, and goodness; and the people declared she was a messenger of God, many who went to see her, doubtful and suspicious, leaving her with tears of homage and sympathy.

The young Duke d'Alençon, a prince of the blood, was so won by her simplicity and dignity, that seeing the grace and ease with which she rode beside the king, he presented her with a charger.

And all the time she continued "simple as ever," as at Domremy, and "speaking little."

And so at last the king gave her a "household," an army was raised, and she was sent to Orleans, there to raise the siege and so to show the sign she was sent to give. Which I had seen.

"She will not have her reward on earth," the young Seigneur de Mailly said. "Our coin is not hers. Gifts and splendours are nothing to her. She lavishes them on the poor. She moves easily and royally amidst the nobles and knights and ladies, gracious and considerate and unencumbered as a born princess. Which indeed she is. Pure and free with the glow and purity of self-sacrificing love. Those who are near her are made pure not by the presence of ice, but by the glow of fire."

XV.

Percival's Story Continued.

THE Maid had not lingered a day in Orleans after the raising of the siege.

Gloriously simple all questions of sowing and reaping, of rewards and punishments become to a life such as hers, which is simply love.

There can be no reaping for love but the harvest of good to the beloved. There are no rewards to love but the success and the progress of its work. Included in these is of course the love of the beloved; but this in endlessly graduated measure, according to the capacity and capability of the being loved.

From God, infinite love for our finite.

From equal beings equal ceaseless vibration of equal love.

From the child to the mother an occasional responsive smile for a heaven of sunshine, until the child, by being cared for and brooded over, itself grows through such care and brooding, fervour and frost of love, to its full stature and equality of being and of love.

It was reward to Jeanne that Orleans was saved, that

the people were free and happy; and, as far as it showed this, their enthusiastic gatherings around her were her reward. It was reward to her warm heart that grateful hearts should love her, and that, loving, they should delight to give.

But the clamour of praise and admiration, the "robes of silk and velvet trimmed with richest furs," were no reward. Money was of use because of the poor; but money gained by pillage, stolen bread, she would not touch even when there was no other.

It was not that she painfully denied herself luxuries, and human praise. In the coinage of the Kingdom where she dwelt they were simply valueless.

On Sunday morning, the 8th of May, the English army retreated from Orleans. On Monday the Maid left for the court of Charles.

There all the forces of inertness gathered against her.

To her first week of combat and victory succeeded a weary month of conflict against sloth and envy and intrigue.

The raising of the siege of Orleans had its advantages even for the most slothful. It spared them the necessity of further flight.

But Jeanne's next enterprise, the crowning of Charles at Rheims, involved vigorous advance, a perilous journey of many leagues, the recapture of many cities, and against this La Trémouille and the courtiers set themselves with all the blind heavy force of indolent human

souls that were dragging themselves down to the level of dead matter.

She entreated for soldiers, for permission only to go forth with those who were eager to fight.

Before the raising of the siege of Orleans the king's treasurer had told him that the royal finances were reduced to four crowns. But Jeanne demanded no money, no fresh soldiers, only to be allowed to use the forces eager to be employed. She implored for work. And the king gave her magnificent dinners, a household with squires and grooms, a royal embrace, and the right to carry on her shield the lilies of France.

A weary month she waited, chafing at the delay, while they held councils, and lamented their poverty and the strength of the English and Burgundians.

She mourned and secretly wept over these ignoble hesitations; for all the while, from all the desolated land, went up the cry of the "great pity" which had moved the angels, the moan of the helpless and the starving. And, moreover, she was pressed on by the conviction that her time was short. She said she herself should not last more than a year—"ne durerait guère plus d'un an"—and that they should make the best use of this year, for she had much yet to do.

Dunois remained true to her, and the Duke d'Alençon, and all loyal soldiers and patriots, whether veteran captains or young knights. And the divines, such as the great Gerson, followed her with sanction and benediction.

But the Chancellor of the kingdom, the Archbishop of Rheims, could not endure her rapid action; and the courtiers could not endure any action at all; the world and the flesh were against her; and still the court would not move.

At length, one day, Dunois took her to the chamber where the king was holding private conference with Christopher d'Harcourt, Bishop of Castres, his confessor, and the former chancellor of the kingdom, Robert le Macon.

She knocked at the door, and when she was admitted, she threw herself at the feet of the king, and clasping his knees, she said—

"Gentle Dauphin, hold no more such long councils. But come as soon as possible to Rheims to receive the crown which is your right."

Christopher d'Harcourt asked if her voices had told her that.

"Yes," she said; "I am sorely pricked to the heart touching this thing."

"Would you not," said D'Harcourt, "tell us here, before the king, how your voices speak to you?"

"I understand," she said, blushing, "what you would ask, and I will tell you willingly."

The king, seeing her much moved, courteously asked if she really wished to explain herself with others present.

She said she was quite willing. And then she told how when she was harassed with the doubts which

people opposed to her mission, she went apart and prayed to God, moaning that men would not believe her; and when her prayer was finished, she heard a voice which said to her, "Fille Dé, va, va, va! Je serai à ton aide; va!"—"Daughter of God, go, go, go! I will be thy help; go!" And when this voice came she was "greatly rejoiced, and would have gladly continued in that state for ever."

And as she repeated these words of the voice, her face beamed with joy, and she raised her eyes to heaven.

Her words moved the king, and at length they sent her forth, on the 9th of June, with a small army.

Then followed her second marvellous week of battle and victory.

On that week of victory it is hard for me even now to dwell; on the courage of my people, and the skill of our commanders, all dashed in vain against the power of the peasant-girl, sent, as she believed, of God.

It was not easy to an Englishman, even with French blood in his veins and his mother's French accents lingering in his heart, to hear of scores of English archers vainly slain, of Talbot and Suffolk, and our noblest captains taken captive or killed.

Only, everywhere that one simple, noble figure raises the conflict from the wars of nations into the field of the great ceaseless conflict between right and wrong.

Good at any cost was it, as I deem, for our England and for us, that she was turned back from the hundred years of war and ravage in the land which was not, and

never could be ours, and could only learn to hate us more the longer we stayed.

"If she was not sure," Jeanne said, "that God was leading her, she would far rather keep her sheep than risk all these perils."

Once more, before the town of Jargeau, she appeared in what to her meant an embassage of peace and of mercy.

She summoned the garrison to depart, unharmed in life or limb, to their "little coast" ("en leur petite cotte").

No attack until all attempts at reconciliation had failed; but then no delay.

The next day was Sunday.

At nine o'clock she caused the trumpets to sound for the assault.

"It was too soon," said the Duke d'Alençon, who shared the command.

"Doubt not," she replied. "The right hour is, when it pleases God. We must use the occasion which God gives. Work you, and God will work." And she added: "Ah, gentle duke, are you afraid? Don't you know I have promised your wife to bring you back safe and sound?"

And in that very assault she kept her word.

He was watching the attack from what was supposed to be a sheltered place beside her, when, with that marvellous clearness of sight which proceeded from entire fearlessness for herself, she perceived a danger threatening him.

"Draw back, for there is an engine which will kill you!" she said; and she showed him a cannon on the walls.

He retired, and a moment afterwards a gentleman who took his place was killed.

Girl of seventeen, protectress of cities and captains yet herself bearing, as she well knew, no charmed life. For at that very town, as she climbed the scaling-ladder with the banner in her hand, a stone broke against her casque and she fell. But rising again instantly she cried—

"Up! up! Our King has condemned the English. At this hour they are ours."

And inspired by her confidence and courage her people scaled the walls and took the city.

This was on the 11th of June.

On the 15th she took the Bridge of Meuse; on the 17th the town of Beaugency. On the 18th she won the battle of Pataye, the first England had lost since Crécy. On the 19th she returned to Orleans.

One more joyous Sunday for the Maid in her Orleans. One more day of joy and triumph in the rescued city, of thanksgivings in the churches, and processions of enraptured crowds in the streets.

For now, not only Orleans, but the whole land of the Loire was free.

And yet, for her, on this second week of victory, followed another month of conflict with the real foes of the Maid and the kingdom.

Even in the hour of triumph there was a base victory gained by the powers of sloth in that secret strife which never ceased.

The city of Orleans had lavished large sums in decorating the houses and streets to welcome the king. No one doubted that he would come to share the joy of this liberated city.

But La Trémouille and the courtiers dared not trust him to the sunshine and fresh air of a people's welcome.

And while Orleans sang Te Deums and was glad, her king kept apart, taking indolent pleasure in a castle of La Trémouille's near at hand.

Orleans was delivered; the Loire was won back. The next step was the consecration and coronation. The winning back not of the kingdom to the king, but of the king to the kingdom and to true royalty.

Against this La Trémouille and all who ruled the king by what was lowest in him, steadfastly plotted. They had prevented him from giving himself to the loyal welcomes of Orleans. To Jeanne's great grief they rejected the aid of the Constable de Richemont; and declined, or wasted in every possible way, the succours of men and treasure which now came pouring in on all sides from a country once more inspired with hope and belief in itself. They made subtle pretexts of petty attacks on small places still in English hands; they made sounding boasts of magnificent expeditions against the core of the English occupation at Rouen. *Anything*

to hinder the real work of reconquering the kingdom and liberating the king!

When for a few moments the king himself had an interview with the Maid, he was moved by her passion of patriotism and loyalty. She wept, and he entreated her to spare herself and take repose.

But her repose consisted in doing her work, "pricked to the heart," until it was accomplished. And she, in return, entreated him not to despair or doubt, but let himself be crowned.

Until at length, afraid of being herself carried off from her true path into some of these fatal by-paths, she left the town of Gien, where the court was sojourning, and insisted on camping in the open field.

Without her they could do nothing, though with her they endeavoured to do nothing. And at length the reluctant court yielded and consented to be swept on to victory.

On the 29th of June the journey to Rheims was begun.

But of all those weary days of secret conflict and that week of victory one picture remains most vividly on my heart.

It was at La Pataye.

The battle was over, and some French soldiers were handling roughly an English prisoner. The Maid saw it too late to save him. They had wounded the captive Englishman to death.

She sprang from her horse. She rebuked the cruel

deed, so common that no one thought of such wrongs but as the common accidents of war.

She held the poor bruised head, and sustained the dying man as a sister to the last, sending for a priest to absolve him.

It is thus that, as a ministering angel of mercy, she oftenest shines on my heart.

XVI.

Percival's Story Continued.

IT was on the royal journey to Rheims that the three young Seigneurs de Mailly had turned aside to pay a visit to their kinsman and kinswoman in the château where we were imprisoned.

And while this great conflict was going on in the large world outside, a combat was waging also in the little world where my shepherding lay; and in this also I could only look on and wait.

From the first appearance of Bertrand de Mailly, Owen had evidently felt him an antagonist.

Between him and the Lady Blanche there was an obvious harmony, as of two instruments that are not only attuned together, but have been wont to be played in concert.

I say instruments, not voices, because the whole harmony seemed to me artificial, as of skilfully constructed strings, not of human souls.

On one point Owen's disgust with the supercilious stranger brought him into more harmony with me.

"It is clear enough why we English should distrust the

Maid," he said; "but to use her, to take shelter under her courage (for courageous the witch is) like a set of frightened chickens under a hen, and then to peck and carp at her, that seems to me the basest of treachery. If the Almighty had but sent England such a succour, instead of letting the devil send it to these lazy Frenchmen!"

I hoped that the counter-poison was working in my brother.

The cynical ignoble worldliness of Bertrand was rousing him to see what a hideous thing this selfish worldliness was.

"Some Frenchmen do recognize and honour her," I said. "Dunois, the young Duke d'Alençon, all the bravest captains, all true women, the common people everywhere, all who have eyes single enough to see. Here, even, the young Seigneur de Mailly, and old Sir Tanneguy."

"The Lady Blanche is an Italian," he said, as if apologizing for her. "She is bound to the Maid by no ties of patriotism and gratitude."

"There are those at home," I replied, "who would not have needed to be born Frenchwomen to see what the Maid is."

He was silent.

The spell was by no means broken yet.

In a day or two the young seigneurs rejoined their king, and the charm of the lady's keen wit, and her easy graciousness, always occupied with the present as if

there were no past, and no absent, enfolded Owen once more.

"She says she has told Sir Bertrand she has no patience with their adulation of this peasant, and then talking against her. She is quite sorry for the poor young girl, when she thinks what undeceiving awaits her."

"Undeceiving!" I said. And I thought "there are many spells and many undeceivings."

The lady was more gracious than ever now to Owen. I believe, simply from the instinct that a subject was being lost. She could not resist the necessity of winning him back.

A sweet gravity came at times into her manner towards him, just a slight shade of difference from her joyous and easy bearing towards Sir Bertrand, as if to indicate a greater depth in the sentiment.

She chose graver passages in those perilous Italian lessons. She did not so much affect the chase and noisy gatherings as quiet rambles.

And she spoke with a kind of regretful sympathy of our ransom and return, asked questions about our home in England, our amusements and occupations there, and insinuated that souls seemed somehow sometimes mislaid and born in the wrong countries—Owen's nature was so obviously fitted for the wide, intermingled social life of the great Italian cities, just as her own was. But the transplanting with him seemed to have been at birth, with her at marriage.

She said nothing disparaging of our England, but in some way the "petite cotte," as Jeanne called it, grew smaller as she spoke, the life duller; a fog and a chill seemed to fall over all.

I don't believe she planned to entangle and ruin my brother's life. What could she intend to do with it?

Simply, he was a subject straying from his allegiance, and had, at all costs, to be won back. And to such allegiance as he had given he was won back.

And for me there was nothing but to let the spells work, and to trust that when he woke from this enchantment, as wake he must, he would wake as he had never been awake before.

Meantime I worked hard at my Latin. The child Beatrice and I pursued our rambles among the forests and villages near, fuller now than ever of the Maid.

And one day we found little Domremy in a joyous tumult of triumph and rejoicing.

Some of her old friends had gone the day before to Chalons to see her in her great estate; scarcely expecting to do more than look at her from a distance, as at the king or the queen.

But they found her friendly and simple as ever. Several of them spoke to her. To Jean Morel she gave a cloak that she had worn. She had great delight in seeing them again.

She was as much at ease among the nobles, they said, as with them, and as cordial with them as in the old peasant days.

To one of them, D'Epinal, she said a word which seemed to me to give a key to what her true conflict was. She said to him, *she feared but one thing,* TRAITORS.

The old devout habits of her childhood, those around her told them, were still kept up.

She delighted in the sound of church-bells. At twilight she loved to creep silently into the churches and pray.

She was but a servant of all for God's sake.

She received gifts from great personages, and returned them by giving such little presents as she could in her turn. But her delight was in giving to the poor, and in praying in church, especially beside the children, as when she had cherished little Mengette, and nursed the little boy at Domremy through his sickness. Often, her chaplain Pasquerel said, she would find out the days on which the orphan children of the convent schools received the communion, and then she would go up amongst the little ones to Him who bid such come to Him, and communicate beside them.

Princes and great captains liked to talk gravely with her, as with a good and wise man; and yet they said that, save for her marvellous aptitude for war, she was simple as any other young girl.

The common people thronged around her to touch but the hem of her garment; they threw themselves before her horse's feet; they kissed her hands and feet; they brought her written Paternosters to touch and

bless. She smiled and said any good woman's touch would do as much good as hers. But no gentle dissuasion of hers would turn aside the enthusiasm of gratitude which surrounded her. They called her "the angelic." To have her hold a child at the font and let it be called by her name, was an honour dearly prized. They sang songs and ballads in her honour; they struck medals with her likeness on them and wore them as sacred symbols.

But all the while, undazzled, unbewildered, her face was set steadfastly towards the deliverance of France. The raising of sieges was as simply a duty as, in old days, the spinning and keeping sheep; and her heart often went back lovingly to the simple old life in her father's house at Domremy.

The father who had so jealously guarded her; the mother who had taught her the Creed and Lord's Prayer; the curé who said "he had never known so beautiful a soul," and had taught her the history of the Saints and of France; the bell-ringer to whom she had given the little cakes to make him regular in his bell-ringing; the young girls and little children she had loved and played with; it was good to see them gathered that July evening in the village street before the door of her father's little gray house, listening to those who had seen her yesterday in her glory, yet unchanged to them, and simple and kind as ever.

There was a joyous excitement about the little village. Yet to me, as the little groups dispersed to their various

homes in the long village street, and up the slopes, it seemed as if there were an awe and solemnity among them, as of a congregation dispersing from some sacred service. It was as if they had seen a vision of angels, as if they had been recounting the deeds not so much of a warrior, but of a saint.

As the child Beatrice and I went our way up the hill to the forest and the castle, and looked back on the village, the lights were burning in a few of the cottages, marking the lines of the streets of the two adjoining villages of Greux and Domremy, along the valley and up the slopes; the cattle Jeanne had helped to watch were in the pastures by the river; the river was winding like a golden cord in the sunset. We passed the little chapel of Notre Dame de Bourlaimont, where she had so often prayed; above us the wind was rustling the leaves of the old oaks of the Bois Chesnu. Our path lay by the ancient well which was said to have healing powers, and under the great beech-tree, the Ladies' or Fairies' Tree, "fair as a lily," one of the villagers said, where Jeanne used to play and weave garlands, or to creep apart from her companions to pray as "before the very presence of God."

And now she was with the army, summoning cities to surrender, saving our England, in spite of herself, for her true work; saving France and her indolent court just as much in spite of themselves; outwardly and apparently on a triumphal march, but really bearing the

Cross in the long procession of the disciples who had followed the crucified Master in the conflict with sloth and treachery and selfishness.

And, more than ever, the whole region seemed to me as a Holy Land.

XVII

Percival's Story Continued.

TWO days after that day when the peasants of Domremy saw Jeanne at Chalons, Sir Tanneguy and the Lady Blanche began to prepare for the journey to Rheims.

Seigneur Bertrand de Mailly was coming to escort them.

"It seems after all probable that this Domremy peasant-girl will have her way and get the king crowned," the Lady Blanche said. "No doubt it has been written among the stars for ages. And when the time comes, the hand of a child may copy the writing of the stars into history."

She was all day among her maids arranging her jewels and dresses. "It made her feel like a child again," she said, "among the splendours of the beautiful streets of the Italian cities."

No arrangements were made for taking the child Beatrice.

"You three will be quite happy together for the few days we are away," the lady said the evening before the departure.

But that evening, as I was returning from my reading with the curé of Domremy, I saw the child's face watching at the window of the keep which commanded the valley; and when I reached the castle gate she was there, and stretching out her hands she said, with a sob in her voice,—

"Take me to Rheims! I must see the Maid!"

"Your mother will take you," I said, "if she thinks you wish it."

"Ask for me!" said she; and whether I would or not, she drew me to the hall, where her mother stood in the robes of state she was to wear at the coronation.

I suppose the lady saw something grave in my face, for she dismissed her attendants, and seated herself expectantly on a large chair in a window. The child knelt before her, and clasped her hands and kissed them passionately.

"Mother mine," she said, "take me—I must, I must be there!"

A cloud came over the Lady Blanche's face.

"Such ceremonials are not for babes," she said. "What has come to thee? Thy book and thy church and thy dreams are more to thee than all these magnificences. The king is, after all, not so very unlike any other seigneur. I will act it all for thee when we come back."

"It is not the king, it is the Maid I want to see!" the child said, breaking through her reserve in her eagerness—"the Maid who knows our Lord as her own

King, Messire! whom all the peasant-children of Domremy love, who has saved France, and lets little children kiss her hands! I want to hear her voice, and kiss her hands. Mother, let me go!"

"A daughter of our house kiss the hands of a shepherdess of our own valleys!" exclaimed the lady haughtily. "We cannot have another ecstatic maid from the Vosges! Stay at home, and learn thy lute and thy book;—or spin, as thy Jeanne did; that is the way to grow like her, if such is thy desire."

But in the twilight old Sir Tanneguy had entered unperceived, and he interposed and said—

"Fair daughter, surely the little one may go! She will be the fairest jewel in thy array."

But the lady was not so easily moved.

"I have none else to rule or to call my own," she said petulantly: "let me at least rule my own child."

The child rose and stood with folded hands.

"I *will* be like La Pucelle," she said. "I will be obedient and good and stay at home, if my mother wills."

But there were tears in her voice, and there was a patient womanly submission in the childish face and attitude which stirred the old man more than words.

"By my bâton, fair lady," he said—"since the Maid permits us no stronger oath—the little one shall go. It is well that she should remember the day, and tell our great-grandchildren of it."

As he spoke, Bertrand de Mailly arrived, fresh from

a sharp ride to join the lady's escort to Rheims, and Sir Tanneguy referred the case to him.

"I will guard the little lady as my own sister, or dearer," he said, "if I am permitted. And, at Rheims, my young cousin Raymond will delight to conduct her. He adores La Pucelle."

The Lady Blanche was too queenly to yield ungraciously. She embraced the little one tenderly, and said—

"It is a joy the more! But who would have dreamt such ambition and gaiety were hidden in thee?"

The next morning the brilliant cavalcade left the castle gates, and wound away by the winding road on the bank of the river.

"I shall see our Pucelle!" said the child to me, softly, that morning. "Perhaps I shall kiss the hands that held the dying Englishman. And then I will come back and tell you."

And so Owen and I were left behind in the deserted castle.

Through all these preparations and leave-takings he had kept out of sight.

When I went to our chamber, daintily furnished, with wide, high windows, I found him with his head resting on his hand, reading a manuscript I had borrowed a few days before from the curé of Domremy.

It was called La Consolacion, or the *Imitation of Christ*, and was stirring the hearts of men and women far and wide.

No one knew exactly by whom it was written. Some

said by the great theologian Gerson, who, after the siege of Orleans, exhorted France to trust the Maid, almost with his dying lips,—for he died a sorrowful, disappointed man, not three months after the siege was raised; some by an obscure Brother, Thomas à Kempis. But whoever uttered the words, those words uttered the cry of the age.

"This is a very remarkable book," said Owen. "It is written by a man who knows the hearts of men, and the deceitful emptiness of the world."

I did not quite know how to reply. Books of piety not being usually Owen's delight, I feared by too much praise of any to turn him from them; and, moreover, I had *not* found the world empty, and I had found the hearts of men return good measure, pressed close, and running over, for any poor love of mine.

"The world as far as it is worldly," I suggested.

But at that moment I caught sight of the cavalcade winding round the last turn at the foot of the castle steep. The dear child's face was turned wistfully back to our window, and I waved her a farewell.

"I thought you had little care for all these splendours," Owen said.

"I was answering the child Beatrice," I replied.

"Yes, all are alike!" he said. "Even that child who seemed so fond of you, and to like to stay and cheer you! Even with her, before this empty pageant and show, all else sinks to nothing."

"It is not the show the child loves," I said. "It is

the reality—it is the Maid she believes to be sent from God."

"You believe that of the child!" he replied with immeasurable scorn at my credulity. "You don't see that they all do *what they like*, no doubt from some angelic and patriotic motive; but always, after all, only *just what they like*. If you will not see the world as it is, how are you to preach to it?"

And he continued reading—

"*Truly it is a misery to live upon the earth.*"

"*Miserable men! yet a while, and they will feel bitterly what a worthless thing, and even nothing, it was that they have loved so much.*"

"*We must not put any great confidence in frail and mortal man, useful and beloved though he be. Nor should we be much grieved if he sometimes oppose and contradict us.*"

"*They that to-day are with thee, to-morrow may be against thee; and men often change to the contrary side like the wind.*"

"*Thou errest, thou errest, if thou seekest ought else than to suffer tribulation; for this whole mortal life is full of miseries, and everywhere marked with crosses.*"

"That man understood the world," Owen commented, with a profound sigh. "*He* did not live in a fool's paradise. This book is worth your reading, brother."

"I have read it much," I said.

But I hardly liked to say with what thought it had most deeply impressed me.

For it had struck me as wonderful that our Lord should, at the same moment, as it were, have given to His Church a Book and a Life, which so corresponded to Him and to each other—an "Imitation of Christ" in words and in deeds.

There were indeed passages in that book which seemed as if they had been given as the portrait of this Maid of Domremy.

I therefore made no answer, but simply read some of these passages to him—

"*By two ways is man lifted above earthly things; namely, by purity and simplicity.*"

"*If thou aim at, and seek after nothing else but the will of God and thy neighbour's benefit, then thou shalt enjoy interior liberty.*"

"*If only thy heart were right, then every created thing would be to thee a mirror of life, and a book of holy teaching.*"

And almost unconsciously I repeated her words—

"*My King has other books than those ye clerks wot of.*"

"Messire a un livre où nul clerc n'a jamais lu, si parfait qu'il soit en clércature."

And again I read—

"*Stand without any choice of self-seeking, and thou shalt always win.*"

"*Love flieth, runneth, and rejoiceth; is free and cannot be restrained, giveth all for all, hath all in all.*"

"*Love often knoweth no measure.*"

"*Love feeleth no burden, thinketh nothing of labours, would willingly do more than it can, complaineth not of impossibility, because it deemeth that it may or can do all things.*"

"*It can achieve anything.*"

Again the Maid's words occurred to me: "*The great pity for France!*" "Make use of me, *for I have only a year. I am pricked to the heart, until my work is done.*"

"Yes, yes," said Owen, a little impatiently, "the writer is speaking of the Lord Christ, no doubt, or of some very great saints, such as there were in olden time. We do not expect to see such things now."

"We often cannot see what we will not expect," I said. "Yet thou and I have seen lovely things, even at home."

"At home, yes," he said; "the mother, of course, never thought of herself. But that is quite natural for mothers. And as to thee, old man," he added with a smile, laying his hand on my shoulder, "there is not overmuch self-seeking in thee. But to thee also it is a kind of nature to care for other people. I do not deny that. But what I want thee to attend to is the penetration with which this book speaks of the emptiness of the world. It is very remarkable. I have been learning it lately."

As he spoke, the joyous sounds of music and laughter came up from the departing cavalcade.

"What do *they* care," he said, "with all their gracious smiles and words, for us living here in captivity?"

"We need not pine here long," I said; "Peter has not forgotten us, nor the dear ones at home. They and their love, at all events, are not vanity and emptiness, nor do they change 'like the wind.'"

A crimson flush came over his face.

For a time he said nothing, then he murmured half-regretfully, half-angrily—

"Poor, pleasant little valley of Danescombe; anything is an excitement and a variety there."

I did not look at him. I felt sure he was chafing inwardly against a prick of self-reproach.

And after a time he resumed—

"'*Votre petite cotte*,' this insolent Maid called England. 'Go back,' said she, 'to your petite cotte.' Compared with this wide world it *is* a little fold—to be penned up in. Not only on account of its size; in itself. For here, in this France, one feels open to all the world beyond—Italy, the Empire, Rome, Constantinople, the East, Jerusalem; one feels a member of the wide world, of one great Christendom."

"Yes," I said; "for England to conquer France means, I think indeed, for England to become a little detached province of France, and our English nobles but squires and pages in great French houses. But what if God intends something more than that for our England? What if He sent the Maid to drive us home to make our *petite cotte* something greater than we know of yet?"

He looked thoughtful.

"There *is* something in being among one's own," he

said after a time, "in having work to arrange, and men to rule."

"There is something too in being loved!" I ventured to add.

Again he flushed.

It seemed to me that something deeper than had yet been awakened in him was stirring.

He had been so accustomed to please, so unused to having any shadow of doubt or fear as to the love felt for him, that the thought of such love as Cecilie's as a rare and priceless treasure, in contrast with the flatteries and enchantments which had lately been around him, was new to him.

We need to see the meteors sometimes, flashing and vanishing, in order to comprehend the steadfastness of the stars.

Owen accompanied me on my rambles through field and forest. He came with me to the humble little house of the curé in the village.

The good man was in great excitement that day. It seemed, at last, that the coronation at Rheims was close at hand; and he had made up his mind to go with some of his parishioners to see the triumph of the king and the Maid.

His face beamed,—as was the case with so many in the village, and everywhere, who had really known her, —when he spoke of her; so "simple and gentle and pleasant," he said, "praying so fervently, saying so little, and doing so much for all, because she loved so much;—

because she loved so much, and had no thought of herself. When she had only her one little bed to give, she gave *that* to destitute fugitives, and sate up in the chimney corner. And now that she has rich robes, and horses and jewels, it is the same. For *she* is the same. Rich as a queen, when she was a poor peasant-girl, because of the love; free as a child among all the princes, because everywhere her delight is to serve." "Fille Dé, Fille de Dieu, daughter of God, *all things were under her*," as this new book of the "Imitation" said, "*not she under them.* He had never known so beautiful a soul."

Owen was silent as we walked back to the castle.

"This girl may be deluded, but she cannot be wicked," he said. "I will not call her evil names again."

Owen was very gentle and peaceful and unusually silent that evening, and I felt sure he was pondering many things in his heart.

And again we read together that wonderful new book of the "Imitation."

"It is curious," he said one day, "but that poor priest's words about the Maid keep recurring to me."

We had been reading the words—

"*Aim in every external occupation to be inwardly free, and master of thyself, that all things be under thee, and not thou under them, that thou mayest be lord and ruler of thy actions, and not a slave and mercenary, but a freeman transferred to the lot and liberty of the sons of God.*"

"*Give all: seek nothing; and thou shalt be free in heart, and the darkness shall not weigh thee down.*"

"I am a very long way from that," he said, "but that peasant-girl seems not so far off. I did not think the saints could be so near us."

"Perhaps, if our eyes are open, we may see more of them yet," I said.

"If it is love that makes saints!" he said, with a brief smile. "But it must begin and end, the book says, with the love of God. And God only, I suppose, can judge as to that."

"True," I said, "we see in the saints the love of others, of children, of friends, of the poor, of France, of England, of all. And then one day the veil is lifted, and we see what our Lord must have been seeing in them all the time,—the hidden source in the love of God."

He laid his hand on mine.

"It is dark to me," he said. "How is any one to *begin?* by loving each other, or by loving God? You see the book says much against the bewildering and entangling love of the creature."

"I scarcely know," I said. "Perhaps at both ends, and on every side. By loving those closest to us; the Holy Law says, 'thy *neighbour*.' And by loving God with such poor sparks of love as we have; be it but the love of hunger, like the prodigal, for the bread in the father's house; or the love of gratitude for such daily Divine kindnesses as we cannot but see!"

"Poor sparks of love, indeed!" he said. "It seems to

me, sometimes, as if I had never really *loved* at all, never given *myself*, only taken and taken, 'husks or anything!'"

If it were so, I thought, he would not be the first who had wakened up to the love, only when the loveless husks were denied.

We were sitting at the window looking down over the valley as we spoke.

And as we looked up we both started to our feet.

For toiling up the steep was a well-known figure climbing wearily up, and looking even more grave and bowed than usual.

We called his name.

And in an instant Peter the Wright stood erect, as if the load of ten years had been taken from him by the familiar voices.

In a few moments we had met him at the castle gate.

It was Sunday evening, the 19th of July.

Weary as he was, he would not take food or allow himself rest until he had seen us alone, and delivered to us the contents of his bags and pockets.

"There!" he said, "the ransom is ready. And Mistress Elaine and Mistress Cecilie have not a jewel nor a costly robe nor any little precious things left in the world. And the old master has sold his favourite horse, and the little palfrey Master Percival trained for Mistress Cecilie, all are gone."

He looked with a mixture of pride and grudging in

Owen's face, as he said it. "Poor foolish hearts! And they think scorn of losing everything, just for the hope and joy, master, of welcoming thee."

Then Owen broke down altogether and hid his face in his hands, and said with a broken voice—

"O Percival! I am not worthy, as you know. It was not only the world that was empty and hollow. *It was I.*"

It was from Peter the Wright we first heard of the consecration being accomplished. Rumours, indeed, had begun to reach us from many sides, from neighbours and villagers of Domremy and Greux who had gone to see the great ceremonial, and the triumph of the peasant-girl of the village, scarcely yet more than a child. But the first full account we had of it was from Peter the Wright.

He was not a man to be moved by splendours and ceremonials.

It was rather his way to think scornfully of them, as of masks hiding the hollowness within.

But of this he spoke with an enthusiasm not to be repressed.

He had chanced to lodge on the previous night in the same inn with Jeanne d'Arc's father and mother. And he was much moved by their simple dignity.

They were plain peasants still, they lived in the old small farm-house at the end of the village. Their family was ennobled, but their own mode of living and thinking was unchanged.

They went forth from the village to see their young daughter among princes and warriors, to see her far more than crowned; herself, as every true man and woman felt, *bestowing the crown.*

And then they went back to their hemp-fields and their meadows, to the spinning and the weaving, and the household work she had shared.

They asked nothing for themselves, and the Maid asked no reward for them; only for her village, that the taxes might be remitted.

"*That* show," Peter said, "was a glimpse into the reality of things."

It was a triumph, not only of the Maid, but of substance over shadow, of truth over show, of Divine humility over human pride.

"There were the houses hung with drapery and garlands," he said, "rich tapestries hanging from the balconies full of citizens and their wives, and nobles and ladies dressed in velvet and cloth of gold; and below, in the streets, the grand military procession, trumpets and banners, and men-at-arms, and cavaliers on horses gorgeously caparisoned, the armour shining, the plumes waving; and at last, within the cathedral, bishops and priests and nobles gathered around the king as the archbishop poured the holy oil on his head at the foot of the altar.

"And yet every heart felt that the source and centre of all was, not the army, or the nobles, or the king himself, but the simple maiden who stood beside him with

her white banner in her hand, and afterwards knelt at his feet, and said, with tears, that now '*the pleasure of God was fulfilled.*'"

It was on Sunday, the 17th of July.

On Sunday, the 12th of May, not three months before, we had seen her riding round the walls of Orleans, under our forts, then full of English soldiers who had never known defeat, with the citizens crowding around her, secure in her mere presence.

Not six months before, France had not known a victory within the memory of man, and Jeanne had started with her escort of six from Vaucouleurs.

"At Rheims she was clothed in shining armour," Peter said, "and looked like an angel.

"It was reported," he added, "that the archbishop and the court were, many of them, envious of the Maid, and grudged her her due share in the triumph. But the people had no envy and no hesitation. All hearts turned to her, and she turned to God, as the source of all; and so the hearts of men were lifted up; and to the common people, at all events, that coronation day was a great and sacred solemnity.

"It was like King David's ceremonies," said Peter; "the keeping the sheep, and fighting the lion and the giant Goliath, had come before the crowning. And that made the crowning as real as the shepherding and the fighting."

Peter had not found his journey across France at all easy.

"When I came to France last," he said, "the peasants hated and *feared* us. Now they hate us and do *not* fear us, which does not make travelling easier. For, of course, I cannot be saying to them what is in my heart, 'Poor dear souls! I am as glad as you that your Maid has hunted us off from our devil's work of worrying and harrying you, poor sheep and lambs.' And God knows, I had liever be creeping like a stray dog through the wasted land, than wasting and devouring it like a pack of wolves."

Soon after Peter's arrival, tidings began to trickle in from the returning peasants how one and another had spoken to the Maid and found her simple and kind as ever.

And there were rumours of the king having bidden her take any reward she would, and of her having asked for nothing but that for her sake Domremy should be delivered from all taxes thenceforth for ever. Which we know, later, was really done.

And next came the rush and tumult of the return of the Lady Blanche and the castle cavalcade.

With these came the broken and discordant murmurs of the world with which Jeanne's real battle was.

The Archbishop of Rheims, Chancellor of the kingdom, it was whispered, thought the Maid sadly given over to vanity, and to the love of fine clothes unbefitting her station.

And both he and La Trémouille, her persistent hinderers, were determined that the consecration being now

accomplished, there should be no more of this indecorous and bewildering haste in driving the king from one enterprise to another.

There were also rumours (unless I mistake and this was later) of a shepherd-boy who claimed to have had revelations, and of another woman who had visions.

In the second stage, visions and revelations are not difficult to be had! And these new "visionaries," it was said, were far more reasonable and tractable than Jeanne, and were content to wait on events, and on princes.

The Lady Blanche said it could not be denied that the peasant-girl had acted her part well. The scene in the cathedral was admirably arranged, and some said she entreated the king now to send her back to her mother and her sheep, with as much sincerity, she supposed, as there was in the custom of bishops declining to be made bishops.

"For to any observant person," the Lady Blanche said, "it was too clear that the girl was far too much at home with the captains and the princes, ever to relish spinning peasant garments at her father's little farm any more. She had a keen mother-wit, bright penetrating eyes, a noble carriage, stately and easy, and it was not likely she would choose to exchange her furred robes and glittering armour, and her horses caparisoned like a king's, for the woollen peasant's dress, and the distaff, and the shepherd's crook."

The lady's view had become even more in harmony than ever with the Seigneur Bertrand, and it was given out that she was to be betrothed to him.

The child Beatrice was more silent than usual.

But she looked more like one of the angel-children in the pictures than ever.

"I have seen her and heard her voice!" she said to me; "and now I do not want any more pictures of our Lord and the holy Virgin. I know they must have looked like that.

"She saw every one, I am sure; she even saw me! Her eyes were on me, and she smiled on me, even on me. And yet all the time I knew she was seeing those we cannot see, if only she looked up; I saw that in her eyes.

"And do not believe about the clothes. Of course you never would. She cares no more for them than the angels would. The angels wore dresses that dazzled people's eyes, the curé says; but it was not because they wanted to dazzle people, but because their clothes let a little of the glory through. And she is like that.

"And I heard her speak. We were quite near. She knelt at the king's feet and said—

"'Gentle king, now is fulfilled the pleasure of God, who willed that you should come to Rheims to receive your worthy consecration, to show that you are the true king, and he to whom the kingdom ought to belong.'

"She wept, and the lords around her wept too; soldiers and young and old men, they shed tears."

"You will see her again one day," I said.

"I cannot tell," she said gravely; "she may die; she says she may die any day, and will have done her work

this year. Or I may die. Little children do die as young as I am.

"Perhaps I shall see our Lord first, you know," she added, with one of her sudden illumining smiles. "And then I shall tell Him how Jeanne helped me to love Him and see what He is like."

"And perhaps He will tell her one day how much you loved her," I suggested.

"Perhaps," she replied, shaking her head doubtfully. "But the great joy is to know *she is there*, and to *love* her.

"Every one does not love her," she concluded, great tears gathering in the dark eyes. "But I think they will all have to, one day, when they find out. And then, oh, how sorry they will be!"

Then suddenly turning the conversation, she said—

"Do you know I am to be betrothed, like my mother, to the young Seigneur Raymond de Mailly, cousin of Sir Bertrand. He too loves Jeanne. I would rather," she said very gravely, "have married you, and been always with you. But you are to be a priest, and so I cannot. And it is convenient, they say, on account of the land and the peasants. They are mine, and Sir Raymond has none of his own, and will take care of mine. And, then, you know," she concluded, "I may die! And you are going away."

For Jeanne the hour of triumph was but a momentary resting-place in her career.

She had France to save, and must press on, and, if she could, must press the sluggish court on.

Orleans was delivered.

Her king was crowned.

But that was little; and she had "but little time" to be with us.

The fair fields of France must be delivered from the invader; so she had said from the first.

It was at Rheims that her hardest campaign began.

The people had often thought they had glimpses of the invisible hosts that succoured her. At Orleans it was reported the patron saints, the bishops St. Euvert and St. Aignan, had marched in pontifical robes around the city; and at the moment when, lifting her standard against the walls of the fort, she gave orders for the last assault, a dove was seen hovering over her. At Troyes a swarm of white butterflies made the air radiant. Before the journey to Rheims, cavaliers armed at all points, riding on great white horses, had been beheld careering in the air, across the seas from Spain to Brittany, crying, "Be not dismayed."

But none but Jeanne herself knew how the swarms of envy and sloth, and base selfishness, perpetually buzzed and swarmed around her, blinding men's eyes, if not her own, and stinging her to the heart when they dared.

She shed many tears alone, or when at mass in the churches.

She wept much, radiant and gay as she could be between her tears; and she had reason.

The great and good Gerson before he died had warned the people, that though God had surely sent them succour through the Maid, "as His people of old resisted Moses and the prophets, so might they reject her."

And so indeed they did, crowning her with titles and honours, showering gifts and glories on her, and all the time piercing and straitening her heart by setting all her noble purposes at naught.

Soon after the coronation she was riding across Ferty-en-Valois with the king, between Dunois, her faithful friend, and the Archbishop of Rheims; and as the people gathered round them, shouting "Noel, Noel!" welcoming the king, she said—

"This is a good people. I have never seen a people who so rejoice in their noble prince"—(her loyal heart was full only of France and her king)—"would that I might be so happy as to end my days, and be buried in this land."

"O Jeanne," said the archbishop, "in what country think you ye shall die?"

"Where it shall please God," she replied, "for I know neither the hour, nor the place, any more than you do. And I would it might please God, my Creator, that I might return now, and lay aside my armour, and that I might go back to help my father and my mother to keep their flocks and herds, with my sister and my brothers. They would be very glad to see me."

She wished it. But she did not will it.

She *willed*, as she said, from the beginning, believing it to be God's will, to drive the English from France.

"This," she said, from the beginning to the end, from Vaucouleurs to the stake, "she was sent to do."

And this at last she *did*, though on earth she saw it not.

Not having accomplished this she would not willingly, yet, either repose or die.

And so, in July, began those weary months of hindrance and treachery and secret opposition which ended in her capture in the following May.

After Rheims, testimonies of homage came to her from all sides. The Comte d'Armagnac wrote to her from Spain to ask which of the then so-called popes was the true; Bona Visconti wrote to entreat her to reinstate him in his duchy of Milan; the aged poetess Christine de Pisane, revived at seventy, to compare her in verse to Gideon, Esther, and Judith. The people thronged to touch but the hem of her garments.

But she knew too well that what seemed a triumphal entry was but the Way of the Cross.

Every step forward towards the deliverance of the kingdom was taken against a reluctant court. And at last their blind selfishness succeeded.

The king and army she had brought victorious to Rheims, and to the very walls of Paris, were at last, against their own will, as well as that of the Maid, led back to the Loire.

All that dreary winter, this slow warfare, which was but prolonging the waste of French as much as of English blood, dragged heavily on.

And I meanwhile, smitten with fever, lay weary and exhausted on a bed of suffering, unable to stir. I seemed to suffer and linger through all the weary winter in the confused echo of the struggles of Jeanne and all that was noblest in France against La Trémouille and the Archbishop of Rheims. For there are moments in the life of nations when their noblest rouse them above themselves. And there are moments when their basest sink them below themselves.

But, nevertheless, for me, on my bed of pain, had dawned one ever-brightening brotherly hope which sustained me through much.

It came about in this wise.

Just after the return of the Lady Blanche, when the Seigneurs de Mailly had once more departed, and Owen and I were left alone with the family of the castle, during the settlement of the ransom, one of the fearful epidemics, always lingering in the train of war, was creeping insidiously through the country.

My brother came to me one night, with the old languor in his manner.

The old life had been resumed for a few days: I rambling with the child through the forests, and paying my last visits to the curé; Owen riding to the chase with the lady and Sir Tanneguy.

So the last week wore on.

It was Saturday, and on Monday, all being arranged, we were to leave for England.

Owen stood looking out of our window, down the valley, where we had stood watching the cavalcade depart for Rheims.

The book of the "Imitation" (Consolation) lay open upon the table.

"That eloquent old monk, after all, did not know *what* he was leaving when he abandoned the world," he said.

"But we are not leaving the world," I said. "We are only abandoning other people's world for our own."

He was silent for a few moments, and then he continued—

"It grieves me to leave her to those worldly seigneurs, to be pulled down from her own true height, down and down."

"She has chosen," I said.

"There may be choice and no choice!" he replied oracularly. "Many women besides queens have to submit to destinies they would never have chosen, and, submitting, of course to *seem to choose.*"

My indignation rose irrepressibly.

"Can you believe the soft velvety falsehoods still?" I said.

"She has said nothing," he replied. "Only if one has eyes, one cannot help seeing."

The old spell was closing in once more around him. Yet there was a dismal kind of consolation to me in

seeing that it was not through love, or even passion, my brother was held and wounded now, but through self-love and vanity.

"She does not love you, nor you her," I said. "You both love merely the image of yourselves in each other's eyes."

"Love!" he exclaimed. "Do you think I could be false to Cecilie, and break her heart?"

"I am tempted to think sometimes," I said, "there would be more fire in the ashes of a spent-out love for another than in these poor reflections of love which seems merely complacency with Cecilie for loving you. The ashes of a poor hearth-fire are warmer than the beams of the moon, which is only a looking-glass to the sun. Have you no heart to beat or break for Cecilie?"

Owen only replied—

"You are scarcely speaking like yourself," and turned away.

Perhaps I was not speaking like myself. For the next day the fever had seized me, and by that Monday morning I could not stir.

Then the Lady Blanche was roused into the most genuine alarm. She said that, deeply as she regretted to do anything that might seem harsh, it was impossible her maternal heart could suffer her to allow me to continue under the same roof with her child.

And, accordingly, I was packed up in a litter and carried, by the old curé's permission, to his house near the church at Domremy.

The lady would have been content for Owen to stay.

But my brother had no hesitation; he and Peter followed me, shaking off the dust from their feet at the castle.

And so those months of most bitter and sweet experience began.

I suppose the moving through the air increased my illness. It passed from one stage and one form of suffering to another, the various leeches giving various names—small-pox, black fever, low fever, I know not what. They had all one remedy, sweating or bleeding, and none of them had any cure, and so my strength oozed and oozed away.

After the first two months there was a lull, and Owen insisted on sending Peter home with tidings.

Then came a relapse, and for months longer, through the snowy winter and the languid spring, I was left alone with Owen.

No longer to take care of him: to be taken care of by him, body and soul, until our hearts and souls grew together with an intensity of trust and mutual care which would to me have been worth a hundred-fold such months of suffering.

It was like lying still and seeing my brother's soul born afresh into a new, beautiful childhood, his true self rising like a winged creature from the shrivelled chrysalis of the old. Also, with a delicious feeling of sharing in it, in some mysterious way, through my anguish and helplessness; something such as I suppose mothers feel, for joy that a man is born into the world.

I suppose the recollection of the controversy of that Saturday, controversy being so rare with us, lingered dimly on into the wanderings of the fever.

For, at first, my remembrance is of a longing to repair some wrong done to Owen, pleading for him with Cecilie, as if I had wronged her by suspecting him, pleading for myself with my mother that I had tried hard to be true to her dying charge.

I suppose something of the unreturned love came out in my ravings; for, although Owen never breathed a word of guessing my secret to me, there was a depth of meaning in his voice when I got a little better, and tried to thank him, and he stopped me and half-sobbed out—

"What have I done? You gave up your whole world for me!"

Then I learned, day by day, the beautiful things in my brother, which had made every one love him. They had not loved the false in him, the worst of them, but the buddings or the flashes of the true which was to be.

The quick responsiveness to every feeling of others, the insight like a woman's, without words, into unexpressed wants!

He never asked me a question at the wrong time, seldom perplexed me by asking me anything. He always knew, from the hours and kinds of food, to the amount of spiritual thought, how much I could bear.

Countless thoughts came to me in that illness; joyful yet awful glimpses into the ways of Providence, and the necessity of reverently waiting on them.

So delicately interwoven, of such fine invisible fibres is the texture of His work, that we, when with our dim eyes and clumsy fingers we would set some tangle right, too often are irreverently plunging through and breaking the beginning of some finest web of His designing.

Often Father Adam's words recurred to me—

"The sheep best help one another by following the shepherd close."

To act Providence for others we require omniscience. In caring practically for another, the first thing is to be content continually to have our plans crossed, our impatience checked, to be delayed when it seems to us the moment for haste, to be turned back when it seems to us the moment for going forward.

All those months—nay, years—I had been trying to fulfil my charge to take care of Owen; and now I was laid down, bound hand and foot, unable to think, at a crisis when I should have thought my most wary watching essential to him. And he seemed to learn more, in a brief space, by the mere necessity of taking care of me than by all my laborious taking care of him.

Oh, holy and marvellous mystery of family life, setting helplessness to melt away selfishness, weakness to feed on strength and consecrate it; slowly perfecting in men the likeness of the Son of man, by simply turning their hearts away from self to those who depend on them!

How I had wrestled with those spells of flattery which seemed to me eating out and destroying the inner life of my brother.

And, lying there, helpless and in pain, I saw them drop off him like cobwebs.

For my illness was no easy one to bear or to help.

It is a strange experience to find the body which has hitherto worked so harmoniously with the spirit that one scarcely thinks of them as separate, becoming a helpless, loathsome burden of flesh, a peril to others to touch, and a pain to see; to find our very bodies, as it were, the cross to which we are nailed.

And then to find all the humiliation and helplessness and anguish working out for my beloved, what all my care and thinking seemed to have failed to do! Intense, awful glimpses, indeed, came thus to me of the possible meanings of the miseries and sicknesses of this whole body of the Church and of humanity.

And during all the winter of my sickness the Maid was carrying on her last campaign for France; struggling against the king himself to save for him his kingdom and himself, against the mean suspicion and the base treachery of La Trémouille and the Archbishop of Rheims, and all the hosts of sloth; the people indeed with her, some of the captains and nobles eager for her to lead them on, yet in the inmost, and on the highest level, too often terribly alone, gloriously alone, in her unfaltering purpose of rescue, with her "Voices" and her King.

In a dim way she was with me throughout my illness, mingled confusedly, as in my dream at Orleans, with my mother and Cecilie.

But always it seemed now as if the Maid herself, like myself, were struggling with delirious dreams, helpless and bound, against inaccessible foes, *her foes and ours.* For never could the thought abandon me that in driving the English from France she was saving England.

And, indeed, the conflict she was sustaining during those months from July to May, in the year of grace 1429, was more like the struggles of a nightmare dream than anything real.

Everything real was in her favour, a victorious army, cities and country panting to be delivered from an enemy, money and aid of all kinds pouring in from all sides, a consecrated king, the enemy discouraged; nothing against her but the sloth and illusions of the king's court.

As I heard of the campaign, from time to time, all seemed to me unreal and confused as in a feverish dream.

Nothing seemed to keep back the French from victory, but some inward mysterious indisposition to be victorious.

There were sieges raised without reason, mock battles in which the hostile armies confronted each other for days; La Trémouille, at Crespy, caracoling ostentatiously before the English army until he chanced to fall from his horse; and then retreats without defeats on either side.

Until, at Christmas, on one of my recoveries, I heard that at last La Pucelle and the king were before Paris, and the assault was to be made in earnest. The Duke

d'Alençon had made a bridge over the Seine, in order to attack the city on its weakest side.

And then came suddenly the news that the Maid had been wounded in the assault, and though herself (as at Orleans) unmindful of the pain and eager to press on, had been carried forcibly from the walls; that the king had himself broken down the bridge which might have opened to him his capital, without explanation or reason, and that the whole French army were in full retreat (retreat so rapid that it looked like flight) for the old pleasant country on the banks of the Loire, where, whoever reigned over the kingdom, La Trémouille could reign unhindered over the king.

After that came rumours of terrible English vengeance on the country abandoned by her king, of cities re-taken and pillaged, of fields ravaged, the whole northern provinces and the Isle of France forsaken and abandoned, as the reward of their loyalty to Charles, to the fiercest retaliations of our troops.

And mingled with curses on the king and the court, but too well deserved, came ungrateful and doubtful murmurs against the Maid herself, as if her power were waning and her mission over.

Rumours also came of a foolish prophetess called Catherine, who promised victory without fighting, and was encouraged by the Archbishop of Rheims, as if to lower the Maid and her mission by base parodies.

Jeanne, indeed, we heard, showed her wonted sense regarding this Catherine, and proposed to stay the night

with her to see the heavenly Lady whom she professed to have seen, but who never came.

And as a still more effective test she proposed that Catherine should go with her to the siege of La Charité; but she declined, saying "the weather was too cold!"

Jeanne was, indeed, the same.

From Marguerite la Touroulde, a widowed lady with whom she sojourned three weeks after the coronation at Rheims, the curé heard how she kept to her old paths of devotion and prayer, undazzled by adulation and victory.

But the sadness at the depth of her heart weighed on my heart as I grew better through the spring of 1430.

I thought of her idling away, as she would think, the precious months, with the king in Touraine, while the cry of desolated provinces and captured towns came from the land she would and could have saved, "*pricked to the heart*," as she said, "*till her work was done.*" Idling away the precious months when she knew "*she could not last more than a year!*"

The king tried to quiet her with patents of nobility, and permission to bear the royal arms.

Her family bore them. But she, for herself, would never adopt any motto or heraldic device, but the simple words "Jesus, Maria."

And then, at last, when the valley of Vaucouleurs was growing bright with its coat of many colours, in May, came like a thunderbolt on the village, where so many loved her, the terrible news that the Maid was captured

by the Burgundians, abandoned, and left outside the gates of Compiègne, dragged off her horse, bound, and thrown into prison.

And with the terrible news came dark suspicions of the basest ingratitude and treachery.

"*I fear nothing but traitors,*" she had said at Chalons, to her old acquaintance D'Epinal. And all recalled it now.

Yet all the village believed it could but be a temporary check.

The king would never suffer her to remain in captivity, the Maid to whom he owed his kingdom and his crown!

Losing her would teach the court what she was to all! All France would rise to rescue the Maid who had rescued France!

XVIII.

Percival's Story Continued.

HAD the Maid, indeed, been basely and deliberately betrayed and abandoned in the sally from Compiègne, when, as she was making her way back to the city, pursued by the Burgundians, the gates closed just as she reached them?

How could it be that every man with a heart in him did not insist on opening the gates, and rescuing her, the Maid, the young girl of eighteen who had saved Orleans, who had saved Compiègne, who was saving France?

But however it came about, the moment passed, the generous impulse which might have saved her was lacking, and Jeanne was dragged from her horse, seized by the men-at-arms, and carried off captive.

Whether they betrayed her at the last or not, what was too certain was that treachery, envious plotting, and hatred were the real cause of her capture; the treachery of the courtiers, to whose baseness her presence was a continual rebuke, and the heartless ingratitude of the king she had crowned.

There was bitter weeping at poor, helpless little

Domremy, where she was so known and beloved, as the weary weeks went on and no tidings came of any attempt being made to save her.

A terrible rumour reached us at one time that she had attempted to escape by rashly throwing herself from the tower of the castle where she was imprisoned, and had all but killed herself.

None of those who knew her brave and patient spirit would believe she had so sought to take her fate out of the hands of God.

And by degrees the truth reached the village.

She had been sorely tempted to attempt an escape. She had a severe inward conflict. Her voices, especially her beloved Saint Catherine, repeated every day that God would aid her. She replied, that since God would aid her, she would like to try and aid herself. She would far rather die than fall into the hands of the English.

At length her jailers told her that Compiègne was on the eve of being taken, and that every one in the town would be put to the sword, down to the children of seven years old.

Then her passion of rescue vanquished her; and she tried to let herself down from the window by straps of leather bound together. These broke, and she fell stunned and senseless on the ground.

For three days she would not or could not eat. But at last Saint Catherine "cheered her once more, and told her to confess and ask pardon of God."

And then came pathetic accounts of the love and reverence she had won from the ladies of the castle where she was imprisoned.

The same gentleness, and simplicity, and generous care for all around, and love of God and love of France, and delight in her devotions, as had made her dear at Domremy!

It was impossible not to hope she would be set free. She was not in the hands of the English, but of the Burgundians, of a knight of good family, John of Luxembourg, a man actuated by no hatred to her, and with no defeats to avenge.

But John of Luxembourg was poor, and Jeanne's ransom was precious.

He would have preferred, it was said, to receive the ransom from the King of France, and waited to see if any offer would be made.

But not a finger was lifted up in that cold and cruel court to save her.

The Archbishop of Rheims announced to his episcopal city the capture of La Pucelle, with a Pharisaic complacency, as a warning against vanity and pride. "It was a judgment of God," he said, "because she would not take counsel, but would do her own pleasure, because she was proud and loved fine clothes." Also "he knew a young shepherd of the mountains of Gévaudan who would do quite as much for them all as Jeanne."

And meantime the English were pressing for her to be delivered to them.

And, alas! unable to compass her execution in any other way (for to kill her as a mere prisoner of war would be contrary to all chivalry), they called in the aid of the Church. The University of Paris, and the Bishop of Beauvais, the traitor Cauchon, demanded her to be given up to the Inquisition as a heretic.

On consideration of this being done, the English Government offered John of Luxembourg, into whose hands she had fallen, ten thousand gold francs; and, in spite of the remonstrances and tears of the ladies of his family, he yielded to the base temptation, and the Maid was sold.

One more instance of affectionate homage rendered her reached us at Domremy. It was the last.

At Abbeville, as her Burgundian captors were taking her to the English, the ladies of the city came to visit her in prison, to show their reverence and sympathy for the captive deliverer of France. Indeed, from the beginning to the end good women never failed to understand, revere, and love her. Their kindness pleased and soothed her. She kissed them "aimablement" when they took leave, asked their prayers, and said "adieu" in a way which meant much.

Also at Crotoy, the chancellor of the cathedral of Amiens, then staying in the castle where she was imprisoned, confessed her, and administered to her the eucharist. A terrible interval had to be gone through ere they suffered her to partake of her next and last communion.

Thus the Maid was sold to the English. And after that I could not bear to stay at Domremy.

The curé and the simple villagers, as far as they knew me, knew that I myself believed her mission to be as much for the good of England as of France, to turn us by God's mercy back from ravaging the fields and homes of France to cultivate our own fields, and minister to our own homes in England.

But England was my fatherland; it was because I so loved her that I could also love and revere the Maid.

Patriotism, like family feeling, may be a mere exaggerated vanity, if we start from the selfish "I" to the "*my* family, *my* country," and seek for our country a glory as poor and selfish as for ourselves.

But if it be true patriotism, an expanding of the waves of real love to the home, the neighbours, the country, we can no more desire ill-won glory or mere increase of possessions for our country than for ourselves.

To be ready to sacrifice everything rather than that our country should fail in her true destiny, should do anything ignoble or unjust, that seems to me true patriotism.

And it was the anguish of fearing that the hatred and bitter resentment felt by most Englishmen towards the Maid, who had checked our victorious career, would work itself out in cruel and pitiless revenge, which made it unendurable to me to stay longer in the valley where her holy and loving childhood had passed, and where she was so beloved.

I was still little fit for the journey; but we resolved to take it in short stages and depart homeward at any cost.

The ransom had been made to include us both, on condition that we neither of us took arms again in this war against France.

Once more I went over all the places hallowed by the presence and the prayers of that most generous and brave and tender heart.

The evening before we left I crept up alone to the little chapel in the wood, Notre Dame de Bourlaimont, where she used to pray so often alone, and to hang the garlands made under the Fairies' Tree.

As I knelt before the altar there, in an agony of prayer for England and for the Maid, that my country might yet be saved from committing a great wrong, a soft footstep came quietly up the aisle, and when I rose I found that the child Beatrice had been kneeling beside me.

We went silently together out of the church, and there, in the porch, she laid her little hands on mine, and said, her brown eyes fixed on mine with an expression of entire trust—"They would never let me come to see you. But I know, whatever your people do, you will always love our Jeanne."

"I am going home to-morrow," I said. "But every day, everywhere, I pray for Jeanne and for you."

"Be happy for me," she said. "I am betrothed, you know, to a good man, who honours our Jeanne. You

could not help being English," she added; "and Jeanne did not hate the English. She only wanted them to go home and be good."

"The Maid is from God, little one," I said, "and therefore, like our blessed Lord, she is the friend and succourer of us all."

"And you," she said, "are to be a priest of the holy Church, and *she* is the friend and succourer of us all."

The tears gathered in her eyes, and tears to that repressed heart meant, not relief uncontrollable to a woman, but an agony of uncontrollable pain as to a man. She checked them, and, with a sob, lifted up her face to kiss me.

"You are my brother of Paradise," she said. "Talk to your sister of the little child, the little French sister, who loves you. Adieu." And turning to the old nurse who had come with her, she went hastily away.

But once more she turned back and said—

"Whatever any one does or says, I shall always know you are true to the Maid."

And so the dear, tearful, childish voice ceased, and she vanished into the forest.

Solitary and sad the forest and the slopes and the meadows lay before me in the dim evening light; the forest where Jeanne had loved to pray, and where, some said, the birds knew her and came to her; the carefully tilled fields her busy, capable hands had helped to cultivate; the meadows where she had kept the village flocks.

The village church bell sounded up the valley as I stood there.

I went along the village street. There were the companions of her childhood, Hauviette, Guillemette, and her little darling Mengette, still a child.

And in the house, which I could scarcely bear to pass, sate the mother who had taught her the Our Father, the father who had preferred, for her, honour to life, now in anguish, knowing her in the hands of my people, of her enemies.

Too surely the voice so clear and strong, yet so soft and womanly, as I had heard it in its message of mercy at Orleans, would be heard on that humble threshold no more.

There was little sleep for us that night.

Once more, the next morning, we heard at early mass the voice of the curé who had confessed the Maid, and knew what a "beautiful soul" was hers.

And then, late in October, with the yellow leaves falling slowly and noiselessly through the misty air, we left the quiet valley which Jeanne had left a year and a half before, in early spring, to go forth and save France.

And even as we rode, the Maid herself also was riding from St. Valéry by Eu and Dieppe to Rouen, no more with grateful throngs of her rescued countrymen pressing to kiss her garments, but guarded by men who knew her only as their enemy, and a sorceress and a heretic.

Too surely I felt she would never tread these her native fields again. And yet a solemn conviction was on me that she had not failed, but that her work for England and for France was done.

XIX.

Percival's Story Continued.

THE autumn had chilled and bared the world to early winter before the Maid entered Rouen.

To us who had seen her last at Orleans, and remembered her entrance and her departure thence, the contrast was not to be forgotten.

Then the captains, nobles, princes she had led to victory were riding as attendants by her side; the people she had rescued, pressing around her to secure the life-long remembrance of but one touch; and she at home with all: with the princes, for they were her brothers in saving France and their king; with the poor, because she knew the heart of the poor, and always loved to help them.

And now, the grim escort of foes whom she had defeated, of whose language she scarcely knew more than the oath which gave us our name in France ("Godons" or "Goddem"), men to fall into whose hands she knew too well was worse for her than to die, who believed, or wished to believe, her witch, heretic,

everything they would hate their sisters or daughters to be!

In the streets of Rouen she was received with a fanatical fury and hatred which was scarcely to be wondered at in soldiers who had been checked by one peasant-girl in a career of unbroken victory, and, alas! of unhindered pillage, and now thought that her capture proved her success to have been the work of the devil.

Many would have desired to have her tied in a sack and thrown into the Seine at once.

But a profounder policy and a far more diabolical hatred lay underneath this popular fury in the hearts of the men in authority, lay and ecclesiastical, who had her destiny in their hands.

To destroy her influence in France, to prove England right and restore our conquests, it was necessary, not merely to kill the Maid, but to slander her, to prove her no Christian, no true Maid, for ever an enemy of God and truth and goodness.

And for this purpose the tribunal to judge her must be ecclesiastical; and the death she must die, as had been perceived from the first by her enemies at Orleans, must be the death of a witch and an apostate, death by fire.

For the sentence terrible enough to sully her whole life and work, they must go, alas! to the priests of Him who would not break the bruised reed.

For the model of her torture they must go to the frightful pictures of hell itself not long before flashed

before the eyes of Christendom by the fiery genius of the Florentine Dante.

She was carried to the château, and there thrown into a cage where her enemies were allowed to come and see her.

Among them, with an incredible baseness, with the Earls of Warwick and Stafford, came John of Luxembourg, who had sold her.

He said he came to ransom her, if she would promise no more to bear arms against England.

She said he mocked her; she said she knew the English would make her die; and she added, that if one hundred thousand more "Godons" were in France than at present, they should never have the kingdom.

Lord Stafford was so enraged, he would have run his sword through her; but Lord Warwick withheld him.

There were agonies in store for her, to which the cage and the sword were indeed mercies.

The journey to Rouen had exhausted the little strength I had regained, and I could not proceed to England.

Owen would fain have waited on with me, but I prevailed on him to go; and what was more, to be married at once by Father Adam, and not to wait, as he had intended, till I was in holy orders.

In the midst of all the distress and anguish for England and the Maid, a quiet well of joy was ever springing up in my heart for Owen. For the blessed life of

caring for others through which the heavenly Father trains His sons to the imitation of Christ had begun in Owen, never more to cease.

And to me had been given that best joy of so loving, that the joy of our beloved becomes simply and naturally our own joy, their well-being our well-being; so that to follow Owen in spirit to Danescombe to the welcomes and the love there, was a true happiness that sustained me through the dark months that followed, as it sustains a tired labourer to come home at evening to the welcome of wife and child.

For I had resolved not to leave Rouen until I saw what would become of the Maid.

Not the Maid only, but England, our own England, was on her trial at Rouen through that drear and awful winter; and, for that matter, France also.

And what least aid the least Englishman could render to save England from a great crime, or to solace a true saint in her martyrdom, could best be rendered here.

And thus my brother left, and I took up my abode with a quiet old priest attached to the cathedral, and continued my preparations for the priesthood.

And so, then, as afterwards, I gathered up every possible detail as to the process against La Pucelle. If nothing more could be done for her, it was something to add one more to the number of those who knew the truth concerning her.

It seemed as if, to the end of time, the two nations, French and English, and the two orders, ecclesiastical

and lay, should be able to throw no stones at each other as to their share in this crime.

Of the tribunal which condemned her, every member, from the judge to the recorders and ushers, was French. The University of Paris and the Inquisition sanctioned and commanded all.

But the princes, captains, and statesmen who paid the judges and assessors, and who threatened with death any who ventured to speak of mercy, and the guards who never left her a moment's solitude night or day, were English.

And yet, if I had to choose among all those guilty of her death the men in all the world I would most have shrunk from, it would not have been the hard Duke of Bedford, the violent Warwick, or even the arch-murderer Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais, but the traitor L'Oyseleur, who confessed her, and the King of France she had crowned, for whom she pleaded with God and man at the stake, who, without one generous effort, let her die!

Of those who loyally befriended her in the least thing, I will give every name and every detail. Alas! they were so few, they are easy enough to remember.

And among those also, thank God, there were English as well as French.

In the first place stands Nicolas de Houppeville. When summoned to be one of the assessors at the trial he declared that the prosecution was not legal, because the Bishop of Beauvais was on the side hostile to La Pucelle, and because he made himself judge of a cause

already judged by his metropolitan, the Maid being approved of and sanctioned by the Archbishop of Rheims, in whose province Beauvais was.

The Bishop of Beauvais was so enraged at this declaration, that when De Houppeville came to take his seat at the tribunal, he excluded him, had him thrown into prison, and would have exiled him to England, or thrown him into the Seine, if he had not been rescued by the intervention of others. But the warning was sufficiently plain to any who dared to utter a truth favourable to the Maid.

Again and again during the prosecution the slightest leaning to mercy was repressed with threats; and the vice-inquisitor himself, having shown himself not docile enough, was threatened with being thrown into the river.

Yet one man gathers and represents in himself the guilt of the details of that wicked prosecution.

"*It is you,*" Jeanne herself said, on the day of her death, to the Bishop of Beauvais, "*who have made me die.*"

The great crimes of the world are perhaps not always committed by the greatest criminals.

In that central Trial, which was the test and trial of our whole human race, which lasted, not four months, but one terrible prolonged night, except with the very few who instigated it, how slight the motives were and how faint the passions!

Pilate certainly did not hate. He would have risked everything, except the favour of Cæsar, to save.

The multitude did not hate. They had, at the last, to be "persuaded" to demand Barabbas.

Of the chief priests, possibly fanatical hatred actuated a few, but nothing fiercer than political ambition and fear the rest.

And in *this* trial, which lasted four months, the English chiefs who originated it certainly hated the Maid who had ruined all their political schemes. But of the assessors, probably many accepted the post because, at the moment, it was the safest and easiest thing to do; and as the trial went on, evidently not a few, moved by the simplicity and courage of the Maid's answers, would gladly have saved her. Even Cauchon himself could not have hated her except politically, as the cause of his having been exiled from his diocese. Behind him lay a lost diocese, before him (by English promise) a possible archbishopric. The triumph of Jeanne had lost him one; her condemnation might gain him the other. She was but an unavoidable step in the ladder he had set himself to climb.

What there had been in the lives of these men before, which made it possible for them to be so blinded, and to act as they did, we know not; what causes and what excuses lay hidden deep in their former lives; or whether, indeed, in all cases, the worst crimes are those committed from passions exceptionally fierce, or from the small self-interests so terribly ordinary.

One only is the Judge of men, the Son of man, who "knoweth what is in man," yet loves the world.

We may not judge, lest we condemn the innocent; yet, on the other hand, we are not to excuse, lest we call evil good.

Something in himself had made it possible for the Bishop of Beauvais to blind and steel his heart during those four months to the unveiling of as pure and loving a soul as ever shone before men, and to torture one of the Father's beloved children, one of the Lord Christ's anointed ones, to death.

God knows *what* that something was; and I suppose, now, he knows himself.

XX.

Percival's Story Continued.

ON Tuesday, the 20th of February 1431, the Maid was summoned to appear the next day before her judges.

She answered that she would willingly do so. But she requested that assessors on the French side might be added to those on the English. And she entreated as a favour that she might be allowed to hear mass before appearing.

The Bishop of Beauvais, president of the tribunal, refused permission for her to attend mass, on account of her "abominable clothing,"—an indication as to the point on which the accusation would principally press. To the request for assessors of the French party no answer was vouchsafed.

Already she had remained more than two months chained to her block in the castle prison, her life of continual enterprise and enthusiastic appreciation exchanged for one of unbroken monotony, without fresh air, without movement, without the Church services she delighted in, without one sympathetic look or word.

Well for her that the previous months, brilliant as they seemed, had been no mere triumphal progress, but, in the innermost, a hard battle, step by step, with coldness and misunderstanding and treachery.

Well for her that her devotions had been no mere religious shows and luxuries, but a silent drinking into her silent spirit of the waters of life.

Well for her that she came to her last campaign no untrained warrior in the Holy War.

The first session was in the chapel of the castle. It began at eight o'clock in the morning of the 21st of February.

The first demand was that she should swear to tell the truth on each point on which she was interrogated. There the contest began. She held that she had been intrusted with a secret revelation for the king, Charles VII. She held also that in all things made known to her from Heaven, the sanction of Heaven was needed before it was lawful for her to utter them. And from this point, her duty to God and to her king, no menaces, nor entreaties, nor subtlest persuasion of trained casuists could move her.

"For what relates to my father and my mother, and what I have done since I took the way to France (*j'ai pris le chemin de France*), I will willingly swear; but as to the revelations which I have had of God, I have never said anything of these save to the King Charles, and I will say nothing, even if they cut off my head, because my counsel (the Voices) have forbidden me to tell this to any one."

Beyond this she would not go. To this she swore on her knees with her hands on the Gospel.

But ere that point was reached, the Maid had been assailed with such a prolonged tumult of persuasions and accusations from the assessors, several speaking at once, that it was felt to be a desecration of the chapel to hold another session there.

After the oath, the bishop asked her name and surname, as of a child at the Catechism.

"In my own country they called me Jeannette," she answered. "Since I have been in France, they call me Jeanne. Of the surname I do not know."

Surnames had not yet become fixed among her peasant-folk. She explained afterwards that in her country daughters frequently took their mother's surname.

"Where were you born?"

"At Domremy, which makes one with Greux. At Greux is the principal church."

"What are your father and mother called?"

"My father is called Jacques d'Arc; my mother Isabelle Romée."

"Where were you baptized?"

"At Domremy."

Then as to her godmothers and godfather, and her age. She was about nineteen years old.

"What did she know?"

"I have learned from my mother," she said, "the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the 'I believe in God.' It is from my mother that I hold my belief."

Before dismissing her, the bishop forbade her to escape from prison, on penalty of being convicted of heresy.

She replied that she did not accept the prohibition, that no one could accuse her of breaking faith if she escaped, for she had never given any promise. And she complained that they had bound her with iron fetters.

Yet when it was replied that this was necessary, on account of her having previously tried to escape, with her characteristic candour and straightforwardness, she said—

"It is true, I did, and I still would escape. It is the right of every prisoner." Like the primitive African martyr, St. Perpetua, she simply *could* not call a pitcher anything but a pitcher. Truth was an atmosphere out of which she could not breathe.

So she was remanded to her cell, and the first interrogatory was over.

She was remanded to her cell in the round tower of the castle. No companionship was permitted her, but not a moment's solitude; the incessant watching of a guard from the lowest class of soldiers harassed her night and day.

Worse than this. In her isolation among enemies they sent her a traitor, a priest, Nicolas l'Oyseleur, who pretended to have pity for her, and to know her own Domremy. He spoke to her of her people and her country, as a friend—at first as a layman; and then to complete his treachery, he acknowledged that he was a

priest, and received her confessions, and gave her advice all through the trial, as a friend.

He was one of the very few who recommended that the torture should be applied to her. He pursued her with his false friendliness to the last.

(But at the very last, although I anticipate in saying it here, the most terrible vengeance possible fell on him, as on Judas.

When she was being led to the stake, a sudden passion and terror of remorse fell on him. He fought recklessly to break through the guard and to entreat her forgiveness, but in vain. They drove him away with mockery and menaces.)

And yet she had companionship, familiar to her and sacred.

She had her Voices, and her God—her King, "Messire."

"I call on our Lord and our Lady that they may send me counsel and comfort," she said.

"In what terms do you seek them?"

"'Most sweet God (très doux Dieu), in honour of your holy Passion, I desire you, if you love me, to reveal to me what I ought to answer to these churchmen. I know well, as to the dress (the man's clothes), the commandment which made me take it; but I know not in what way I ought to leave it. Wherefore, let it please you to teach me.'" And then she said, "They come."

They came. She was not left alone.

On the next day the tribunal met at the great hall of the castle.

Jean Beaupère, Chancellor of the University of Paris (in place of the noble and holy Gerson, who had sanctioned the Maid, and had warned France not to reject her as Israel had rejected Moses), conducted the interrogatory.

He began in a honeyed tone, and sought to induce her to take the general oath which she had refused.

But nothing could move her.

Her soul seemed overwhelmed to see that these ministers of God would not see the work of God, recognized by the divines of Poitiers, and by so many.

"If you knew well about me, you would wish I were out of your hands; for I have done nothing but by revelation," she said.

He asked if she had learned any trade in her youth. She said she had learned to sew and to spin, and (her only boast, poor child!) that she would not fear to sew or spin with any woman in Rouen.

They asked her about her confessions.

"Had she confessed to her curé, and communicated at Easter?"

She had.

"Had she communicated also at other festivals?"

"Pass on," she said—"*passez outre.*"

The blending of discrimination with simplicity in her was marvellous. Or rather her simplicity gave her discrimination; she saw clearly because her eye was single. Her reverent and trustful spirit shone through to the last. She asked the theologians quite simply to explain to her if there were two popes, and what the

"Church Militant" meant. But she could never be entangled into making the tribunal a confessional.

Baffled in their intrusion into her inner life, again they badgered her about the oath.

Wearied, she said, "I come from God—*de la part de Dieu.* I have nothing to do here. Send me back to God, from whom I come."

Alas! they were only too eager to do so!

Then Jean Beaupère, with a voice of interest—he always began with honeyed words—asked her how long it was since she had neither eaten nor drunk anything?

It was Lent.

If she had broken her fast, she would have made herself liable to be accused of contempt for the Church.

She replied, "I have neither drunk nor eaten since yesterday at noon."

Fasting, she had to endure for hours these interrogatories! Thus, every snare laid for her only served to bring out her uprightness and innocence. She scarcely ever even lost her sweetness of temper, or gave a hasty or worried answer

Jean Beaupère returned to her "Voices." When had she heard them last?

"Yesterday and to-day, in the morning; at Vespers, and at the Ave Maria." Her beloved church bells were all the share left her now in the services!

The heavenly friends had waked her, she said, without touching her. Whether they were in the room or not, she knew not. They were in the castle. "Did she

kneel to listen, to give them thanks?" "Being in bed," she replied, "she gave thanks, and sat up and joined her hands, and implored guidance; and then the Voices told her to answer boldly, and God would help her."

And, penetrated with the conviction of the reality of her mission, she turned to Bishop Cauchon, and said—

"You say you are my judge; *take heed what you do, for, in truth, I am sent from God, and you place yourself in great danger.*"

All through, there were moments when all thought of her being on her trial for life at a human tribunal seemed to leave her. In her glorious, heroic habit of saving, she forgot herself entirely, in the thought that her judges were at the tribunal of God, and that she must plead with them not to injure *themselves.*

A girl of nineteen, without counsel, badgered and pursued for months by learned doctors to whom she would fain have knelt as ministers of God, she all the time stood, in faith, at the Judgment Seat of God, and pleaded with Him for them.

"I believe firmly, as firmly as I believe the Christian faith and that God has redeemed us from the pains of hell, that these Voices come from God."

And she told how they said to her, "*Ne te chaille de ton martyre.* Be not dismayed at thy martyrdom, thou shalt come at last to the Paradise of God."

"If she was so sure of Paradise, then," they answered derisively, "why did she confess?"

"One cannot keep one's conscience too clean," she answered.

"Why, then," resumed Jean Beaupère, "does not the Voice speak to the king himself?"

"I know not if it is the will of God," she said. "Without the grace of God I could do nothing."

Bishop Cauchon perceived at once that these simple words might prove a snare to entangle her, and intervened with a question which one of the assessors dared to say she need not answer.

"Are you," he asked, "in the grace of God?"

If she said "*Yes*" it would be presumption; whilst a "*No*" might prove her consciously in mortal sin. She felt no indignation, she saw no snare, but, with her eyes fixed like a trustful child's on heaven, walked fearlessly on, and replied—

"If I am not, please God to put me in it; if I am, please God to keep me there."

"*Si je n'y suis, Dieu veuille m'y mettre; et si j'y suis, Dieu veuille m'y garder.*"

And she added that nothing in the world would afflict her so much as to think she was not in the grace of God. She thought if she were living in sin, the Voice would not come to her.

Ashamed and confounded, they abandoned that track; and Jean Beaupère led her back to Domremy.

She spoke freely of her childhood, of the Ladies' Tree and the well beside it, said to have healing power. She had sung and danced under it with her playmates; the

beautiful tree they called the "Fair May." She had woven garlands there for the image of the Holy Virgin. But of fairies or miraculous cures she herself knew nothing.

And so day after day the cruel baiting of the noble and gentle creature went on.

Yet there must have been times, I think, when she had a kind of natural intellectual enjoyment in the baffling of her enemies, smitten as they were into folly and stupidity by their own falsehood.

One after another they were kept at bay by her clear, keen words, keen as sunbeams, or the glance of her own clear, pitiful eyes.

"She had had prayers made for her sword," they asserted, the sword taken from the church of St. Catherine of Fierbois.

"It is easy to see I would wish my armour to be successful," she replied.

"Which did she love best, her sword or her banner?"

"I love my banner forty times better," she answered. She always bore it into battle, she said, instead of her sword, to *avoid killing any one.* "And I never killed any one," she added.

They sought to prove she had superstitiously honoured her standard.

"Which helped most—you the standard, or the standard you?"

"Be the victory through the standard or through me, it was all due to our Lord."

"If another had borne it, would it have had as good fortune?"

"Of that I know nothing; I leave it with our Lord."

"Why was her standard carried at the coronation at Rheims, rather than another?"

"It had been in the strife," she said, "and that was good reason it should have the honour."

"Did she know she was to be wounded at Orleans?"

"I did know it; but I told the king, nevertheless, not to desist from action."

And St. Catherine heartened her, she said, so that she rode on in spite of her wound.

They asked her if she had dictated the letters of summons to the English, which seemed to them so intolerably insolent.

She acknowledged them as essentially hers; and she added, that within seven years Paris would be in the hands of her king, and the English driven from France.

This, let it anger them or not, she "knew from revelation; but the day and the hour she knew not."

And as she prophesied, it came in the main to pass.

They recurred to the visions.

They asked her how she knew St. Michael and the angels from St. Margaret and St. Catherine?

"By their voices," she said, "and because they told her."

They asked her details as to the forms.

She would only say she saw the glorious faces, always

the same, and a great light, and that the voice was "beautiful, gentle, and humble," and spoke French.

"Did not St. Margaret speak English?"

"How could she?" was the frank reply. "She was on the French side."

They asked if the saints had crowns and ear-rings.

She did not know.

"Had St. Michael any clothes?"

"Do you think God had not wherewith to clothe him?"

"Had he long hair?"

"Why should they have cut it off?"

The judges seemed smitten into childishness before the childlike wisdom of the Maid.

There was but one explanation.

She spoke of the things she had heard and seen.

The sessions continued to be held even on Holy Thursday and on Easter eve.

Palm Sunday, with its processions to open the closed doors of the churches, brought no opening of sacred doors to her. The solemn silence of Good Friday brought no pause to her in the taunts and derisions of her jailers.

The joyous clash of Easter bells throughout the city brought her no hymns of triumph, or festive light, or sacred communion.

It brought to her only a further and bitterer stage of the mournful Way of the Cross in which she was called to follow our Lord.

But, firm as she stood in all she believed right, the conflict began to tell on her health.

Early in Holy Week she was struck down with fever. The Holy Season so dear to her, which must have reminded her so bitterly of all she was exiled from, probably was more than she could bear.

Her illness was serious, and brought her near death. Perhaps she would have been glad if death had come so, and opened the gates of God to her for ever.

And yet I think not. She still hoped for rescue, for she did not think her work was done.

Her enemies, however, began to fear she might be "sent back to God" in a way they had not meant; and, accordingly, the Cardinal of Winchester and the Earl of Warwick sent her physicians.

"Take good care of her," said the earl; "the king would not for anything in the world that she should die a natural death. The king holds her dear, for he bought her dear, and wills not that she should die, save by the hands of justice, and that she should be burned. Do all that is possible to cure her."

The physicians asked her from what she suffered.

"The Bishop of Beauvais sent me a carp, of which I ate," she said, "and perhaps that is the cause of my sickness."

Jean d'Estivet, the proctor, who proved himself hard-hearted in other ways, thinking she meant to accuse the bishop of poisoning her, attacked her furiously, and called her a low name.

The physicians thought bleeding would relieve her; but the Earl of Warwick said they must take care—she was cunning, and might kill herself.

However, she was bled, and was relieved, and recovering, when Jean d'Estivet came to see her again, and slandered and railed against her so violently that she fell into a fever again, and the Earl of Warwick had to admonish the proctor to treat her more gently.

Before leaving the name of Jean d'Estivet, let me gather together the few instances that have reached me of some hearts being moved with generous impulses of justice and pity towards her, however hindered by fear.

On her way to the tribunal the usher, Massieu, touched by her devotion, allowed her often to kneel by the open door of a chapel in which the Holy Sacrament was reserved.

Jean d'Estivet discovered this, placed himself at the door between the Maid and the altar, and threatened the usher with imprisonment in a dungeon without light if ever he permitted her this consolation again.

But, nevertheless, the Maid was often allowed to kneel and pray still at that open door.

And at the very council table beside her sate one who would willingly have befriended her if he had dared, a Dominican friar, Isambard de la Pierre (who received her last confession, and sustained her at the last). When he detected any snare or peril in the questions, he would gently touch or push her to warn her, until the

Bishop of Beauvais perceived it, and threatened to throw him into the Seine if ever he so guarded her again.

Now and then, also, the injustice of her judges raised a protest amongst the assessors themselves.

Twice one of them told her she was not bound to reply to a question, in spite of the menaces of the bishop.

At other times, won by the point and truth of her replies, a voice would be found honest enough to confess—

"Jeanne, thou sayest well."

And once, when an over-officious French advocate of the English cause had asked her if she had ever been where the English were killed? and she replied, "You speak mildly. Why would they not leave France, and return to their own country?" an English nobleman had the candour to declare—"Verily, that is a good woman. If she were only English!"

"Did St. Catherine and St. Margaret hate the English?" they asked her once.

She replied, in her simplicity, by a great theological truth.

"They hate those whom our Lord hates, and love those whom He loves."

They had to give up trying to perplex her into saying her visions were delusions.

They next tried to bewilder her by proving that her Voices were lying Voices, and had deceived her, because she had failed and been taken captive.

But she said they had often announced to her that she would be taken before St. John's Day, midsummer, that so it must be; but she must take all in good part, willingly (*en gré*). How deliverance would come she knew not; the day and hour and the way she knew not. She would not leave the prison without leave of God; but if the prison door were open, she would consider God gave her leave, and would go.

When first St. Catherine told her she would be taken, she said she had prayed to die when she was taken, without long travail of prison; but the Voices said she must take all willingly, for so it must be.

They then tried to prove that the Voices had directed her to do wrong things, and were therefore diabolical.

They asked her if her Voices had not commanded her to disobey her father and mother, and leave them, unpermitted.

But here, again, her truthfulness saved her. She made no attempt to excuse herself, but admitted that her Voices had not commanded her to leave without telling her parents. They had left her free, and she had done it to avoid conflict. But afterwards she had sent to ask her parents' forgiveness.

They could, indeed, extract no sign of disapproval from her father and mother. They had sent to make inquiries at Domremy. They had made investigations of those who had been with her since her career began. But they were careful to bring none of the evidence thus

obtained forward. Nothing but good could be found out concerning her.

They had questioned her of her childhood, her youth, her play, her work, her devotions, her revelations, her faith, her home, and had only succeeded in bringing out her goodness and truth and piety.

Now, therefore, they changed their tactics, and narrowed the attack to a point where it could not fail. Henceforth the whole force was directed against the masculine dress, and to the command of the Church—by which they meant their own tribunal—that she should lay it aside. Divines had sanctioned it, and good and noble women had approved of it. But the *fact* was undeniable; nor, believing it to be her duty, and necessary under her circumstances, would she lay it aside. By this track, therefore, her condemnation was secure.

They asked her if she would submit to the Church.

The first point to decide was, *what was the Church* to which she was to submit?

"What is the Church?" she asked. "What did they mean by it?"

They said it was the Pope, the prelates, and all those who preside in the Church Militant.

She said she would willingly submit to the Pope, and she demanded to be sent to him; but she would not submit to her enemies, and in particular to the Bishop of Beauvais, "because," she said to him, "you are my capital enemy."

As to the Church, when first they asked her whether

she submitted to the Church Triumphant or to the Church Militant, she said she did not know what they meant by these distinctions, but she entreated to be allowed to go to mass. "I love the Church," she said, "and would do all in my power for our Christian faith. It is not me they should hinder from going to church and to mass!"

They explained that the Church Triumphant meant the angels and saved souls; the Church Militant, the Pope, the cardinals, the prelates, the clergy, and all good Christians and Catholics.

She said she had been sent by God, the Virgin Mary, and the blessed saints of Paradise; that as to the Church on earth, she submitted to it in all that was not impossible. As to her acts and deeds, she had done them at the commandment of God; that for these she could not refer to any man in the world, only to our Lord; that she submitted to the Church in all things, "*Messire," the Almighty King, being first served. "I commit myself to God,"* she often said, "*and I love Him with all my heart!*"

"I submit to our Lord, who sent me; to our Lady, and all the blessed saints of Paradise. It is my opinion that our Lord and the Church are One, and that we should make no difficulty. *Why do you make any difficulty, as if they were not One?*"

Again they asked, "Would she submit to the Pope?"

(They had previously tried to perplex her by asking which of the two Popes she thought the true, and she

had baffled them by replying simply that in her opinion the true Pope must be at Rome.)

"Certainly," she replied, "she would submit to the Pope."

"Take me to the Pope, and I will answer all that I ought. Take me to him."

Poor child! vain prayer.

Isambard de la Pierre advised her to appeal to the General Council, which had been sitting about a month at Bâle.

She asked what a General Council was. Did it contain French and English—representatives of both sides? She was told it did.

"Then certainly she would submit to it."

Bishop Cauchon angrily silenced the debate. But the Maid's appeal to the Pope and the General Council had been made and recorded, and was to be revived in her favour in long after years.

They said she would be no better than a Saracen if she did not submit unreservedly to the Church—that is, to themselves.

She said—

"I was baptized a good Christian, and I shall die a good Christian."

And if she died, she said, she trusted they would lay her in holy ground. "*But if not, I will leave it to our Lord*" ("*Je m'attends à Notre-Seigneur*").

Revering and obeying all that seemed to her authority, as far as she could, she yet never swerved from

her supreme loyalty to truth and to her Immortal King.

The net was, however, closing in fast around her, and there was no escape. In vain did a great clerk and church lawyer, Lohier, to whom Cauchon applied for confirmation when he came to Rouen, declare that the whole proceedings were illegal, null, and void.

The bishop was furious. Lohier had to fly from Rouen at peril of his life; and the trial, which had so long ceased to be anything but a chase to death, went on. And all the time the false confessor, L'Oyseleur, came to her from time to time, endeavouring to make her answers as perilous to herself as he could; the only apparently kind voice allowed to be near her through all those months being thus the voice of a deliberate traitor.

On the public interrogatory in February, followed the private interrogatory in prison before "*solennel*" doctors chosen by the bishop. Too many had been moved in her favour in the larger assembly, and therefore a few of the hardest were selected. To the private interrogatory succeeded the Accusation, the First Charitable Admonition, the Second Charitable Admonition, the Sentence of the University of Paris, the Sermon to the Maid, in prison, on the text of the sentence.

The University of Paris condemned her on the twelve articles of accusation. 1st. *Her apparitions.* These were false, seducing, inspired by evil spirits—namely, by

Belial, Satan, and Behemoth. 2nd. *The sign to the king;* a lie. 3rd. *The visits of St. Catherine;* a belief rash and injurious to the faith. 4th. *The predictions;* superstitious divination. 5th. *The man's dress worn by commandment of God;* blasphemy. 6th. *The letters:*— these paint the woman, "traitress, blood-thirsty, blasphemous." 7th. *The departure for Chinon;* filial impiety. 8th. *The spring from the tower at Beaurevoir;* pusillanimity leading to despair. 9th. *The confidence of Jeanne in her salvation;* presumption. 10th. *That St. Catherine and St. Margaret do not speak English;* a blasphemy against St. Catherine and St. Margaret, and a violation of love of our neighbour. 11th. *The honours she pays her saints;* idolatry, invocation of demons. 12th. *Refusal to submit as to her deeds to the Church;* schism.

But they could not shake her with interrogatory, accusation, admonitions, or threats of torture.

"I have a good Master, our Lord; to Him I commit myself, *and not to any other.* If you made me say otherwise by torture, I would contradict it when I am set free. If I were judged, and saw the fire lighted, and the fagots kindled, and the executioner stirring them— if I were in the fire, I could not say or sustain anything but what I have said during the trial, even to death."

So little had four months of baiting and insult, night and day, lowered her courage or shaken her faith.

One other method must be tried.

She must be made to abjure, and lay aside her male

attire, and then driven to resume it, and burned as a relapsed heretic.

Deliberately the Bishop of Beauvais set this before him, and he accomplished it.

She had resisted every effort to make her give up the protection of her military dress, and so throw doubt on her Voices and the Divine origin of her whole work.

She had refused even to accept the joy of communicating at Easter (to her the severest trial of all), at the price of wearing a woman's dress, at least such a dress as they offered her, and so denying, as she thought, her mission, her God, and her saints.

And so, the day after Pentecost, the two scaffolds were erected, and she was led forth to submit at last or die.

XXI.

Percival's Story Continued.

FROM the early morning we had watched the preparations, Peter the Wright and I; for he had insisted on rejoining me, eager also to be near the noble creature whose work and whose character, sent, as he believed her to be from God, to stop war, and succour the crushed and bleeding peasantry of both lands, had lifted up his heart once more to believe in the Kingdom of God.

The two scaffolds were erected in the cemetery of the Abbey of St. Ouen, close to the beautiful south door.

It was the 24th of May, the Maid's own month, as I always felt it; the month in a few days of which, two years before, she had saved Orleans and France.

The delicate carving of the pinnacles and towers, exquisite and minute as the sprays of the green leaves, rose clear against the blue sky into the sunshine which was giving life to the world, on the green slopes at Danescombe, and in the forests of Domremy, bringing out the fresh leaves on the Ladies' Tree and floods of flowers in Jeanne's own "valley of many colours."

Perhaps that morning, knowing nothing, the Maid's playmates—she was only nineteen, and some of her companions had not outgrown play—Mengette, Hauviette, Guillemette, were weaving garlands under the beautiful beech-tree, the "Fair May."

Surely they would not fail, some of them, to place crowns of flowers on the image of the Mother and Child, as Jeanne used to do, and they would pray in the little chapel and the church she loved; and surely neither they nor the curé, who so honoured her, would, day or night, forget her in their prayers.

Of her father and mother I scarcely dared to think.

At Tours they had processions and litanies to intercede for her when she was captured.

Perhaps elsewhere; but I know not.

But I longed to send my voice forth in a great cry that morning throughout France, to constrain the countless hearts that did surely beat with boundless gratitude for her, to pray for her to-day, to wrestle for her, to pray without ceasing.

For the combat had reached its crisis. And she was exhausted and faint at heart.

And her enemies knew it, and drew their deadly net of persuasion and terror closer and closer.

For they had resolved not only to burn her, but to ruin her good name for ever. Otherwise the spell would remain unbroken, and England might lose more by her death than by her life.

This May morning, therefore, they gathered all their

forces for a last assault. We did not know the details of the terrible battle till afterwards; but the fact we knew too well.

Early in the morning Jean Beaupère, the most skilful of the divines, came to her prison to announce to her the ordeal prepared for her.

He told her that if she were a good Christian, she would commit herself in all things to our Holy Mother the Church, and he said afterwards that she had promised to do so.

Poor, loyal, devout daughter of the Church, she had not only promised, she had done it over and over throughout the trial!

Then came the arch-traitor, Nicolas l'Oyseleur, the man who could talk to her of Domremy, who had confessed her, whom, at last, they had given to her as her "counsel."

He went with her to the threshold of a little door which led to the scaffold, and exhorted her with all his might to do what they asked her; assuring her that if she did, no harm would happen to her, but that "*she would be restored to the keeping of the Church,*" by which she understood that she would be delivered from the English prisons, the soldiers guarding her night and day, the exile from all holy offices in the Church, the continual, unspeakable insults and perils of the last six months.

With these promises in her ears she was placed on the scaffold. On the scaffold opposite were Bishop Cauchon, the Cardinal of Winchester, and a number of

doctors and priests, and in front of her the pulpit; around, the soldiery she had defeated, and the unpitying crowd.

A celebrated preacher, Guillaume Erard, preached the sermon, or rather the accusation. His text was—

"The branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine."

The solemn echo of the familiar words woke me as if from a dream. They had fallen first on the hearts of eleven perplexed disciples, whose feet the Sacred Hands, so soon to be pierced, had just washed, whose Cup of Life those hands had just filled first for them.

The twelfth, the traitor, had already gone out into the night.

"*The imitation of Christ!*" The hearts of many were ringing with the words in that wonderful new book but just given to the Church.

I looked at the noble young girl, solitary on the scaffold, weary and pale with the long imprisonment, lifted on high, to be the target for a thousand darts of malice and falsehood.

"*The imitation of Christ!*" Was this what it meant?

Occupied by this thought, I scarcely heard the beginning of the sermon. When I began again to listen, the preacher was pouring every injurious epithet on the Maid—"sorceress, heretic, schismatic." She stood silent, unresisting, alone, with every eye fixed on her. Until at last, carried away apparently by his indignation, the preacher turned his eloquence against France.

"O France!" he cried, "thou hast been sorely deluded. Thou hast ever been the most Christian of abodes; and now Charles, who calls himself king and governor of thee, has clung as a heretic and schismatic (for such he is) to the words and deeds of a woman—vain, defamed, and full of all dishonour;—and not he only, but all the clergy of his obedience and lordship, by whom, as she says, she was examined, and not reproved."

Then, turning towards Jeanne, and pointing to her with his hand, he said—

"It is to thee, Jeanne, that I speak, and I tell thee that thy king is a heretic and a schismatic."

Then once more, as we stood beneath the scaffold, the deep, soft, penetrating womanly voice thrilled through us—the voice we had heard on the bridge of Orleans, in the summons to surrender.

At the attack on herself she had stood as unmoved as if the cruel words were only arrows and cannon balls, and she once more planting a ladder against the forts. But when her king was attacked, her king who owed her his crown, and had not lifted a finger or offered a franc to save her, she spoke fearlessly.

"By my faith, sir," she said aloud to the preacher, "with all reverence (*révérence gardée*), I dare to say and swear to you, at peril of my life, that my king is the most noble Christian of all Christians, and that he loves the faith and the Church."

"Make her keep silence," said the preacher to the usher.

But Jeanne's purpose was accomplished. He attacked her king no more.

She had succeeded; she had warded off the blow from her king.

Once more he exhorted her to submit to the Church. She said—

"I will answer you. As to the submission to the Church, I have answered. Let all the things I have said and done be sent to Rome, to our Holy Father the Pope, to whom—*but to God first*—I commend myself; and as to my sayings and doings, I have done them from God."

With that protest and appeal she ceased.

But the preacher, taking the schedule of her crimes, summoned her to abjure them.

She did not know what they meant by abjuring. The usher, Massieu, explained to her.

"I refer to the Church Universal whether I should abjure or not," she said.

"Thou abjurest at once," said Erard the preacher, enraged at being baffled by such an appeal, "or thou shalt be burned alive to-day."

Nicolas l'Oyseleur, the traitor, who had not left her, said repeatedly, "Do what I told you; resume the woman's clothing."

Every one pressed her. "Will you cause your own death?" they cried.

The judges said, "Jeanne, we have such pity on you!"

She said she had done no evil, she believed in the twelve Articles of Faith and the Commandments, and submitted to the Court of Rome.

And as they still pressed on her—

"You take great pains to seduce me," she said.

Until at length, bewildered and exhausted by threats, accusations, entreaties, lying promises, alone among a host of enemies, with one false friend, she said, "I submit to the Church." And she asked St. Michael to help her.

Then, word by word, she said twice after Massieu, the usher, the formula of abjuration they had prepared. It was brief, and Massieu gave witness in after years that the abjuration they made her sign afterwards was quite different from that which she had said. Doubtless, in her isolation, her perplexity, and her false hope, she scarcely knew what she said. For it was hope which had overcome her at last—the hope of escaping the unspeakable perils of her prison, and of once more being allowed to go to the Divine services, to hear mass, and partake of the Blessed Sacrament.

They had told her that, if she abjured, she would be free, and at once taken from the keeping of her English jailers and placed in a prison of the Church, with women near her.

The crowd also so fully believed that she had been admitted to mercy that the English soldiery threw stones at the judges, and the chaplain of the Cardinal of Winchester called the Bishop of Beauvais a traitor.

But the cardinal knew better, and silenced the chaplain.

Bishop Cauchon was indeed no traitor *to the English.* He admitted her to repentance, but "for her wholesome penitence" he condemned her to "perpetual imprisonment," "bread of affliction and water of affliction," to "weep for her faults."

Still Jeanne, and those around, fully expected she would be removed from the custody of the English.

"There, among you, men of the Church," she said, "take me to your prisons; let me be no more in the hands of the English."

But the bishop said—

"*Take her again whence she was brought hither.*"

His treachery was certainly not to the English.

"Fear not," said one of the divines, "we shall catch her again."

And so Jeanne was taken back to the castle to be entrapped into her relapse.

On the very evening of that Thursday after Pentecost the judges visited Jeanne in prison, and persuaded her to resume a woman's dress, as the Church commanded.

The poor child promised to obey in all things. The spring was broken. She had disobeyed her Voices. She had no strength to resist any more.

From Thursday, May 24th, for two days no rumour reached us of the Maid.

What outward ill usage and torture she was subjected to we knew not.

But one thing we knew. She had abjured. She had not been faithful to her Voices—that is, as she would think, to her God.

The faithful, heavenly counsel which had never failed her since her childhood; the glorious light, the holy gracious faces she had rejoiced to see, and had wept with longing to follow; the "beautiful and gentle Voices" which had been so sweet to her at Domremy, at Chinon, at Poitiers, at Orleans, at Rheims, at Beaurevoir, even at Rouen; in palaces, in prison; by night and by day; which had told her to be a good child and to pray; which had filled her with the "great pity" for France; which had given her wisdom which great captains wondered at; which had warned her when she would be wounded, and had heartened her to persevere through the pain; which had tenderly dissuaded her from attempting to escape at Beaurevoir, and tenderly rebuked and consoled her when she repented; which had called her "daughter of God," and bidden her fear not nor shun her sufferings, and promised her Paradise! She would feel she had been false to them at last; and though she did not half know what her tormentors had made her say, that she had thrown a doubt and stain on all the glorious deeds to which her Voices had inspired her and France, on the mission for which her King had sent them.

Bitter beyond thought, we knew, must be her isolation now.

And we prayed for her, as we were able, night and day.

But we need not have been so afraid of the pity of Heaven failing her.

Cruel as were the outrages of men, she was suffered to know very little of the darkness of the hidden Face of God.

On Sunday the tidings ran like wildfire through the city that the Maid had "relapsed;" which meant that she had insisted on resuming the man's dress. "*Insisted,*" poor child! with three jailers in her cell night and day, and two at the door outside!

The bishop and the vice-inquisitor and seven or eight doctors went at once to the prison to see if the report were true.

So well had they acted their part, as regards the English soldiery, that they were threatened and pelted as if they meant to interfere on the Maid's behalf.

They asked her why she had broken her oath and resumed the forbidden dress.

She said she had never intended to take such an oath, and that the dress was the only one fit for her to wear in such a prison.

They had broken their promise to her, she said, of letting her go to mass and receive her Saviour, and of taking off her fetters.

"I had rather die," she said, "than be so chained. But if they will let me go to mass and take off my irons, if they will put me in a merciful prison and let me have a woman with me, I will be good and do what the Church wills."

The shameful truth was known to all, let the judges pretend not to see it as they would. During those terrible days no basest insult had been spared her.

The forbidden dress meant death—death by fire, she knew. She had chosen death rather than dishonour. She also told the usher Massieu that in the morning they had absolutely refused to give her the woman's dress she asked for, and compelled her to take the forbidden clothes. Thenceforth the judgment of earth was little to her. Her only grief was that she had grieved her heavenly friends.

Had she heard her Voices, they asked, since the abjuration on Thursday?

She had; and "God," she said, "has made known to me by St. Catherine and St. Margaret their great pity for the treason to which I consented in making an abjuration that I might save my life: that I was ruining my soul to save my life."

She said her Voices had told her before the fatal Thursday what she would do on that day; on the scaffold they had told her to answer the preacher boldly, that false preacher who had accused her of doing things she had never done.

And then with a strange echo of Divine words probably unknown to her, she added: "If I said God had not sent me, I should be lost; *the truth is, God has sent me.*"

And she lamented having been false to her Voices; though, indeed, she had never meant to deny them.

What she had said falsely was from fear of the fire and the prison. She had rather die than remain in that prison.

But now this fear was over; she had it no more. She knew to what this confession led her, and she would revoke nothing "except at the good pleasure of God."

Bishop Cauchon's purpose was gained.

The Maid had undoubtedly relapsed.

Some of the assessors, Pierre Morice and Isambard de la Pierre, were grieved; but none, alas! though knowing the whole story, had courage to say a word to save her.

The Bishop of Beauvais triumphed.

Meeting the Earl of Warwick and other Englishmen as he went out, he said, laughing, in English, "*Farewell, farewell.* Be of good cheer. *It is done.*"

XXII.

Percival's Story Continued.

IT *was done.*

On Wednesday, the 30th of May, two friars, Brother Martin l'Advenu and Brother Jean Tout Mouillé, went to the Maid, in person, to prepare her for death.

As Brother Jean related afterwards, L'Advenu "told the poor woman that she was to die that very day; and when she heard the hard and cruel death that was so near, she began to cry piteously and to tear her hair."

"Alas!" she said, "do they treat me so horribly and cruelly? And must it be that my body, pure and sound (*net en entier*), and never sullied, must to-day be consumed and reduced to ashes? Ah! I had rather be beheaded seven times than thus burned alive. Alas! if they had taken me to the prison of the Church to which I had submitted, and let me be guarded by churchmen, and not by my foes and adversaries, this would never have happened to me. I appeal to God, the great Judge, against the wrongs and outrages done to me."

Once more the Bishop of Beauvais dared to come and see her.

She met him with a sentence which would surely often come back to his conscience—

"Bishop, *I die through you.*"

And she appealed from him to God.

The bishop had one more work of diabolical malice to accomplish.

The man's dress was resumed, the relapse was assured.

The only further thing to obtain was to sully her memory by a second abjuration.

To this end, in that hour of agony, he assailed her with the argument with which the devil must often have assailed her before, that her Voices had deceived her with false promises, and now abandoned her to die.

Her enemies asserted that she, then and there, promised to abjure again on the scaffold.

But none of them dared make the attempt to persuade her when the last hour came. There is no evidence of this promise but that of her worst enemies, and I disbelieve it utterly

Whether the powers of darkness were suffered to shadow her last moments with doubts I know not.

The utmost her foes could do, by their own confession, was but to drive her from the outworks into the Citadel, *from her beloved saints to God Himself.* Her enemies declared she said, "I *believe in God* alone, and not in those Voices. They have deceived me." And, if she did say so, the pitiful saints we know well would not

misjudge her. With God, poor child, she would soon find her "brothers and sisters of Paradise" again.

"Master Pierre," they say she asked of Dr. Pierre Morice, "where shall I be this evening?"

And he, knowing well by the evidence of all the cruel interrogatories of these months what her faith and life were, answered—

"Have you not good hope in God?"

"Ah, yes," she said, recovering herself, "and by the grace of God I shall be in Paradise."

And by their own account her persecutors could not contradict her.

The Bishop of Beauvais departed from her at last.

She was left alone with Brother Martin l'Advenu. Then she confessed, and asked for the Communion.

The Communion to a woman about to be publicly excommunicated.

He sent usher Massieu to tell the bishop she had confessed, and asked for the Eucharist.

The bishop consulted with several divines, and replied to Massieu, "Go and tell Brother Martin to give her the Eucharist, and all she may ask." So discriminating and political was Bishop Cauchon's hatred! Her public condemnation and calumniation secured, he knew nothing against her which should hinder her receiving the sacred Body of the Lord, and going forth, although publicly excommunicated on earth, yet nevertheless really absolved and in sacramental union with the Son of God, to meet Him.

And so they brought her the Eucharist.

With a strange, unintended assimilation, they brought the sacred Host without pomp, without light, without escort, without surplice, without stole, laid humbly on the paten, covered only with the linen of the chalice. It was as if they would recall in outward form the parted garments, and the shame, and the cross, and associate thus her King even visibly with the destitution and humiliation of His poor forsaken child.

Brother Martin was much aggrieved at this strangely twofold insult. He sent for a light and a stole. But one thing he said he could never describe, and that was the fervent piety of the Maid, the devotion, and the great "flood of tears with which she received her Saviour."

An alabaster box was broken there full of ointment very precious, which filled all the house with perfume not distilled on earth.

And so, without longer interval, from the tearful joy of penitence and faith and unutterable love, with the Saviour in her heart, they led her forth to die, lifted up on a little cart, with a mitre on her head, on which could be read the words, "*heretic, relapsed, apostate, idolater.*"

In this guise for the last time the Maid came before our eyes.

Around her were seven or eight hundred soldiers; close to her, the usher Massieu and her confessor, Brother Martin l'Advenu.

She wept as she went. She commended herself humbly to God and the saints. And many of the people wept with her.

The tide was turning already.

And bitterer than death was its sudden turning in one heart.

There was, as I have said before, an attempt made to break through the guard, fiercely repelled.

It was Nicolas l'Oyseleur, the traitor who had deceived her with false professions to the last, who when he saw them leading her away to die was seized with irresistible remorse, and rushed towards the little cart to ask her forgiveness.

But the English drove him furiously away, and called him "traitor;" a word which had to him a significance and weight far more terrible than they knew.

They would have killed him but for the interference of the Earl of Warwick; and the earl would not answer for his life if he remained in Rouen.

This day there were three scaffolds; one for the judges, one for the prelates and nobles, and one of stone for the Maid. These were erected in the old market-place in front of the cathedral.

The sermon was preached by Maître Nicole Midi. The text was, "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it;" a truth she had indeed proved by suffering with all.

"Obstinate, incorrigible, heretic, and relapsed; excommunicated from the body of the Church" (though

fresh from Communion with the Church's Lord), "go in peace," echoed through the great open space, and from the towers of the great church. "The Church can defend thee no more; she delivers thee to the secular arm."

Before her, lifted on the scaffold, was the stake, that all might see. She knelt down before it, and made her lamentations and her prayers.

True to herself, to the Divine likeness of patient, succouring Love, to the last she made no defence of herself; she thought only of defending her king. "The king," she protested, "was answerable for none of her acts. Never had he induced her to do anything she had done, good or evil."

She thought, in her loyal humility, she was defending her king against being included in her condemnation. She was, in truth, proclaiming the glorious solitude of her heroism.

Then turning to the multitude, she entreated them humbly, whether of her party or the other, to forgive her and to pray for her, and that every priest present would give her the alms of a mass. She herself forgave all and each the wrong that had been done her.

The English judges were moved to the heart.

There were few who did not weep.

Apostate as she was declared to be, she longed only to die with the image of her Saviour in her sight.

She asked the usher, Massieu, to fetch her a cross. Thank God, it was given to one Englishman to render her this last service!

One of our own countrymen broke his staff and made her a cross from it.

She took it from his hand, and placed it devoutly on her breast.

But she also begged Brother Isambard de la Pierre to fetch her a cross from the neighbouring church, "to hold it," she said, "lifted up straight before her eyes to the last steps of death, that the cross on which God had hung might, as long as she lived, be continually before her eyes."

And when he brought it she covered it with kisses and with tears, calling on God, St. Michael, and St. Catherine, and all the saints.

But the scene grew too long for the patience of her enemies.

As Massieu continued to exhort her, some of the captains cried out—

"How now, priest! would you have us dine here?"

From some unexplained reason, whether remorse or mere haste, the Bishop of Beauvais never pronounced her final sentence.

Did he find it difficult to excommunicate her to whom a few hours before, by the counsel of the doctors, he had sent the Eucharist?

Whatever the motive might be, he only said to the executioner—

"Go on—go on; do thy duty."

The fire was kindled.

She wept for her murderers.

"Rouen! Rouen!" she said, "must I die here? Must

thou be my dwelling-place? Ah, Rouen, I have much fear thou wilt suffer for my death."

All doubt and fear for herself and her mission were gone. She was free, once more, for her old work of saving and succouring.

And a fear came over many of the crowd; fear and great pity, and there was much weeping.

It was broken by a feeble attempt at mocking laughter, but that soon died away.

The English wept. The Cardinal of Winchester, it was said, wept; and the Bishop of Beauvais.

The stake was lifted high, and the flame took long in reaching it.

Brother Martin was holding up the great cross before her, as she had asked.

Forgetting herself, as was her wont, *when she saw the flames come near him, she took leave of him and bade him go farther off*, only asking that he would lift up the cross high that she might see.

He went a little way off, but still near enough to hear her say to the last, in the fire, that her Voices were of God, and that all she had done she had done by the commandment of God; that she did not believe she had been deceived by her Voices, and that the revelations she had received had been from God.

"Fille de Dieu! (child of God) go on; go on. Be not dismayed at thy martyrdom. Thou shalt come at last to the Paradise of God." The full significance of the words was revealed to her at last.

And so she continued breathing dear and holy names —and above all the name of Jesus.

Once more, with the clear, soft voice which had inspired so many to victory, and touched so many to purity and mercy, she uttered the blessed name of "Jesus."

And then her head sank, and her spirit went to Him.

Amid the sobbings and the silence I heard one English voice moan—

"We are lost! we have killed a saint."

And two of her judges are said to have exclaimed, with bitter tears, "Would that my soul were where I believe the soul of that woman is!"

The cross was still lifted up before her in the friar's hands.

But she had awakened to the sight of another multitude and another Judge.

And so, at last, they "sent her back to God."

"The imitation of Christ! The imitation of Christ!"

The words rang in my heart.

Surely it was there.

She had not thought so much of imitating Him, and being like Him, as, *being like Him*, she had thought of succouring the suffering and saving the lost.

For God Himself had stamped the likeness of the Saviour in her heart.

We did not linger many days in Rouen.

While she was being hunted to death and dying, and

we might aid her by our poor prayers, it was worth while to stay.

And when at last the noble, gentle spirit had passed away, for a time heaven seemed open, and the silence she had left on earth seemed as the silence of hushed expectation outside the closed gate of a temple which might soon open again.

But when she was gone a terrible emptiness fell on the city, and indeed on the world in which that brave and loving heart had been reduced to air and ashes.

Moreover, the petty voices of vengeance and ambition which had died around her ashes began to revive.

The cruel triumph had to be made use of. The calumny, sealed by her burning, had to be proclaimed and spread, that the tide of conquest she had turned might flow back in pillage and ravage over France.

And this we would not linger to see.

It was said her old father died of grief a few days after her execution, and that one of the brothers who had been with her through her victorious warfare did not long survive.

It was said also, afterwards, that death in various sudden and terrible forms pursued those most concerned in her death. This, I know not surely; nor do I reck much whether it were so or not.

I know the shadow of her death must have been on their consciences and hearts as long as hearts and consciences had life left in them.

And the sting of death is not in the mode, or merely

at the moment of dying, but in the sin which, unforgiven, makes life bitter, and death but a beginning of bitterer consciousness of lost life.

She prayed for forgiveness from all.

She gave her forgiveness to all who had wronged her.

The sweetest vengeance for her, as for the Master, would be the vengeance of the cross—"Father, forgive them."

And it may be, it may be, that even with the traitor, the vain despair which made him at last rush and struggle, at peril of his life, to break through her guard, and again entreat her forgiveness, was the beginning of an agony of penitence, of the scorching of the "coals of fire" which, shrivelling up the evil entwined with his inmost soul, might at last set it free, a feeble and baby soul indeed, yet fit to take some lowest place of humblest service in the kingdom of God.

Peter the Wright fell into almost utter silence during those last days in Rouen.

It was only on the second day of our home voyage to England that he began to look up and speak again; and then, as we sate alone on a calm evening, just in sight of our own white cliffs, he brushed away the tears from his rugged brown cheeks, and looked up at me.

"She has sent us back," he said with something of a smile. "She will send us all back to our little coast, our own little fold, Master Percival. Her work is done. We shall no more be suffered to tear each other in

pieces, we two Christian nations, peasant and prince and priest, like two evil beasts, one hundred years after another; God will give us to do better work in our little fold, Master Percival. I see it all now. But I have passed through a horror of great darkness. Once more my foolish soul was at strife with the Almighty and I cried out, '*Why?*' and '*Woe.*'

"I had thought the Kingdom was coming. And now, again, all was once more without form and void, and darkness on the face of the deep.

"But last night I had a dream or vision.

"I saw the Maid once more. Some said they saw a white dove flying from the stake as she bowed her head and died. But I saw the Maid herself, as a dovelike saint, swift and glad, darting homeward through the air to God.

"And I heard a sound of welcome, such as when the rescued people thronged around her first at Orleans.

"But she, as then, was pressing onwards and upwards, through them all, to God.

"And then a hush and a silence, and something I could not utter, joy such as on earth we have no speech for but tears; and there that language ceases—for tears, they say, are wiped away.

"'Welcome! welcome home!'

"The Gospel tells of such joy.

"'*His Father ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him.*'

"'*Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*'

"Something of those two together.

"*The joy of the forgiven child*, on the father's heart—sweet and true. Yes, even she needed that joy of pardon, and had it.

"The joy of being *like Him*, and *sharing* His *joy of saving*.

"She has known that, and she shall know it for ever.

"A rapture of silence enfolded all my heart, like a child on its mother's breast. How long I know not.

"And then it was, as if once more she shone out from the light of a multitude of shining ones, herself radiant and white-robed, with something like her old lily banner, and the shining armour, such as I had seen her at the altar at Rheims, as if kneeling once more at the feet of a crowned King, *but not King Charles;* and she murmured, as of old—

"'Messire, my King! Jesus!'

"And then I woke.

"But the darkness was gone from my heart.

"Through her life God revealed to me the Kingdom, and bound up the blessed Bible with our poor lives in France and England to-day.

"Through her death He has shown me the King—her King and ours; and that the kingdom we see is but a beginning of the Kingdom where the multitudes are, where He is and reigns."

* * * * *

And so, at last, we came back, Peter and I, to the dear familiar places, and were welcomed.

And through the quiet years the joy was given me of seeing Owen with Cecilie, among their boys and girls, he spending himself joyfully for others in all holy natural relationships, and enriched as he so spent.

The poor French girl Peter had brought home went patiently about her daily tasks, but drooped slowly, and at last died with the same sacred name on her lips which had breathed on the lips of the Maid.

Unfathomable Name! Satisfying all, yet meaning such infinitely various depths to each!

Father Adam found great solace in the great book of the "Consolation" or "Imitation of Christ."

He said it spoke out the depths of the sadness of the times, and must surely have been written by one, whoever he might be, who comprehended the times, and had struggled hard to mend them, and had seen many things fail—had seen all fail, perhaps, but Him who never fails.

Night and day the sacred, strong words of communion with the Almighty Friend, and of patient bearing of the cross, were on his lips.

"Bear the cross willingly, and it in turn shall bear thee."

"Turn thyself inward, outward, upward, downward; everywhere thou shalt find the cross."

"Love finds burdens no burdens."

And almost the last words I heard him speak were—

"*Wait, wait; I will come and cure thee.*"

And so he died, and left me the precious legacy of the souls to whom he had ministered so faithfully.

But to me Peter's Book was more than anything else, as, no doubt, it was in itself to Father Adam, although to him, as to so many, the leaves of healing came wrapped up in the heart of the holy brother to whom it was given to write the "Imitation."

For in that Book of Peter's shone, ever, before me and Elaine, who shared my life, not chiefly renunciation, nor bearing the cross, nor even being like the Crucified, but *the Christ Himself;* and *the world* He loved and came to save, in all its needs, and sores, and sins, and possibilities of redemption.

The Saviour, and the world He loved and came to save!

And before us, in the near race once, yet so high above us then, and now, the Maid who in her brief life had, it seemed to us, grown so like the Saviour, in living to save.

XXIII.

Percival's Story Continued.

THE years passed on, and the blessed life of taking care of others was given, as far as we could embrace it, to my sister Elaine and to me, in the quiet valleys on the edge of the wild moorland, or by the wild seas of our childhood.

So passed five and twenty years.

The Maid's work was, indeed, in a great measure done: her prophecy fulfilled.

England was sent back to her own fold—certainly, as yet, no peaceful fold—torn and ravaged with the cruel wars of the Roses; yet still was she delivered from the great crime of pouring forth her sons to pillage and ravage France.

In 1449 Rouen and Normandy were lost to us; in 1452 and 1453 Bordeaux and all Queen Eleanor's old inheritance of Guyenne.

The calumnies concerning the Maid have not, indeed, died away.

All lies are mortal, I know, and death-stricken; for He who is life and truth lives and reigns. But

in this thick atmosphere of earth some lies take long to die.

"Sorceress, idolatress, apostate," the falsehoods of the Bishop of Beauvais and the University of Paris still make their way amongst us.

But in France, at least, this wrong is repaired.

When I learned that the time had come for this reparation, I went across the seas to hear and see.

The Maid's father had been long dead, but her mother, Isabelle Romée, who "had taught her" all she knew of religion—the Apostles' Creed, the Our Father, the Hail Mary—still lived, capable, like her child, of nourishing an unquenchable purpose in silence, until the hour for speech came. Patient and resolute, she made no cries of vain lamentation, but never rested until her child's name and fame were cleared.

King Charles remitted for ever the taxes of her village. That was something.

He ennobled her whole family, with an especial patent of nobility, extending to the daughters of the house, and whomsoever they married.

But that was not enough.

Not to be *ennobled*, to be *acquitted* of the false sentence, to be declared good, and pure, and true, was what Isabelle Romée had set her heart on for her child.

Widowed and poor, she had made several costly and fruitless journeys to Orleans and to the court to stir up the authorities there to do justice to the memory of the Maid.

For a time Orleans was deluded and misled by the appearance of a false Jeanne, with some external resemblance to her, who deceived the citizens for some years into giving her a pension.

But this delusion passed away, the impostor was compelled publicly to confess her deception; and France was at last entirely quit of the English domination.

Bitter must the long delays of those years have been to the bereaved mother.

But she never gave up hope or effort.

She spent a great part of her little property in the sacred task.

The city of Orleans gave her a pension equivalent to a hundred a year. She only used it to extend and repeat her appeals for justice.

At length, when Rouen had fallen, the king, Charles, Jeanne's king, woke up to a late determination to restore the memory of the Maid, who had saved his kingdom, given him his crown, and to the last, dying, at the stake, had defended his name.

The shadow which rested on her name rested also on the crown and dominion she had restored, and perhaps, at last he felt, on the character of the sovereign who might have saved her and had not. And so, at length, the petitions of the devoted peasant-mother were listened to, and on the 15th of February 1450, letters patent were issued by the Crown, constituting a commission to inquire and report how Jeanne had been tried and iniquitously and cruelly put to death.

The Commissioner held the inquiry at Rouen. The cardinal-delegate, D'Estouteville, and Jean Brehan, one of the inquisitors of France, were chosen for the work.

There were two great difficulties in the way.

The prosecution had been carried on by the Inquisition, and the sentence pronounced by the ecclesiastical authorities.

And the cardinal D'Estouteville had just been sent to negotiate a reconciliation between France and England, in order to turn the forces of both kingdoms against the Turks.

The cause therefore required skilful steering, in order to avoid at once offending England and impugning the authority of the Church.

The cardinal left the matter to Jean Brehan.

The English difficulty was avoided by making the suit private, not as if instituted by the French king, but by the family of the Maid—her mother, her brother, and her sister.

The ecclesiastical objection was evaded by Jean Brehan, the inquisitor, himself. He zealously pursued the investigation, and concluded that the former judgment was invalid by reason of mistake, that the verdict was against the evidence, and that he was only allowing at last, in this second trial, the appeal to the Pope which had been unjustly denied to Jeanne on her first trial.

The Pope, Calixtus II., on the 11th of June 1455, received the petition of the mother and the two brothers of the Maid, and by a rescript addressed to the Arch-

bishop of Rheims (the archbishop who had grudged her the "fine clothes" had long since died), and the Bishops of Paris and Coutances, he appointed these prelates with the aid of the inquisitor, to revise the sentence.

The Commission recited that "a certain person named Jean d'Estivet" (the proctor who had called Jeanne bad names when she was ill, and had stood between her and the Sacrament at the chapel door), "suborned by persons jealous of the Maid and her family, had given false witness against her concerning heresy, and had refused her appeal to the Holy See."

The new trial was to be opened with great solemnity in the Cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris.

In the quiet valleys near Danescombe the news reached me, and I determined to go and see this great wrong set right, as far as it could be done on earth.

Nothing could dissuade Peter the Wright, old as he was, from going with me.

"The steps of the Almighty are slow," he said, "and it is not often given in a lifetime to see the names of the saints cleared by those who slew them, or let them die."

And so we journeyed once more to France, the France England had lost, and, as I believe, found her gain in losing; through the fields of Normandy, where we had gone reluctantly soldiers of a conquering army, we went once more. I a priest and he a bowed old man. My French speech did us good service. And we stood, for the first time, within the solemn aisles of Notre Dame of Paris.

To us, whose last memory in France had been the condemnation and burning of the Maid at Rouen, it was, as Peter said, like a foretaste of the Judgment Day to be there.

Outside, the people of Paris were gathered in throngs, deeply moved.

Within, in solemn array, in the choir, sate the Archbishop of Rheims, the prelates, and the commissioners.

And through the great west door came the procession. Men of rank and note, many and honourable, come at last to do honour to the memory of the Maid.

But before them all came Isabelle Romée, the venerable mother of the Maid, a stately woman, sixty-seven years of age, walking between her two sons Jean and Pierre, one of whom had fought bravely beside his sister in her campaigns.

The venerable mother spoke, and said with a voice full and clear, though tremulous with emotion—"Jeanne was my lawful child. I trained her according to her age and position, in the fear of God and the instructions of the Church. Although she never harboured a thought against the Faith, yet her enemies, to the injury of the king, arraigned her on trial in matters of religion. They falsely imputed to her crimes, and paying no attention to her denial, nor to her appeal, they have crowned with infamy herself and her relations."

And so she ceased.

To us who remembered the marvellous career of victory, the long-drawn injustice of the prosecution, and

the agony and the nobleness of her cruel death, it was a statement of most touching moderation.

How the mother's heart must have burned beneath the restrained and temperate words!

But it meant the full clearing of that holy memory, and it accomplished its end.

Among the crowd once more I saw those true brown eyes which I had seen last wet with tears in the little chapel of Notre Dame de Bourlaimont at Domremy.

They were full of tears again, but the beautiful grave face, as childlike in its simplicity as ever, was radiant with sympathy as she gazed on the face of the noble peasant-mother, and listened to the words so many had thirsted so long to hear.

It was then and thus I saw once more the child Beatrice, with her husband, Raymond de Mailly, and two noble boys of her own; and as she turned away to weep unrestrained, her eyes met mine.

I saw her again that evening among her children, as true, as tender, as full of trust as ever, with all the forlorn look gone from the lovely, serious face.

"What moments there are even in this life!" she said. "And the best moments are only like unveilings of the world of light hidden behind the poor visible things, the world of light which Jeanne lives in for ever, our Jeanne la Pucelle!"

From Beatrice I learned the end, for we could not long remain in France, and the process of reversing the

sentence and re-establishing the innocence of the Maid lasted two years.

The accusers were summoned to Rouen. But no accuser ever appeared.

Some could not. The judge, Bishop Cauchon, had died long since, and his representatives declined to take the responsibility on themselves.

Four judicial courts of inquiry were opened; at Paris, at Rouen, at Orleans where forty-one witnesses appeared, and at Toul for her own village of Domremy, where thirty-four witnesses came.

Altogether there were a hundred and twenty witnesses, and a hundred and forty-two distinct depositions were taken down.

Beautiful lights shone back on the childhood of the Maid from the testimony of the peasants who had lived close to her, of the old men and women who had known her from her babyhood, of her playfellows who were still living, of all who had known her at Domremy.

And then came the testimonies of great captains, of soldiers who had fought beside her at sieges and on battle-fields; Dunois; the Duke d'Alençon; Louis de Contes, her page; D'Aulon, her esquire; and Pasquerel, her chaplain and confessor.

Finally came the testimony of those who had watched her in prison and seen her at the stake, Isambard de la Pierre, Martin l'Advenu, who had held up the cross before her dying eyes, some even of the assessors and the officers of the court, the scribe Manchon, the usher Massieu; all

recalling some trait of the noble being they had watched so long.

The new trial was concluded at Rouen in June 1456, just a quarter of a century after her death.

The twelve articles, sanctioned by the University of Paris, the only basis of her sentence, were pronounced false and calumnious, and were torn from the records and rent in pieces.

The sentence was pronounced null by reason of the incompetence of the court, and the military interference with the assessors. Jeanne was declared not to have "relapsed," but to have submitted herself to the judgment of the Church. As to her apparitions and revelations it was declared God only could pronounce. As to her dress the court pronounced that the enterprise she undertook rendered it absolutely necessary to modesty and safety.

On the 7th of July, after several days' careful investigation of the points of law, in the Great Hall of the Archiepiscopal Palace of Rouen, in the presence of the brothers of the Maid, and of the public, the final sentence was pronounced. It was declared that the articles against her were falsely and fraudulently compiled; that the pretended abjuration was obtained by a shameful trick and was false; that the trial, the abjuration, and the two judgments against her were false, fraudulent, calumnious, and wicked, founded on errors of law and fact, and that consequently they were of no force or effect; and that neither Jeanne nor her family had

incurred any disgrace thereby, but were fully absolved from all blame.

The decision was to be published by special processions at Rouen and in every town in the kingdom. And a cross was erected on the place where she was burned.

Two years afterwards the venerable mother, Isabelle Romée, died.

The homage of France to the Maid has, since, blossomed out in crosses and monuments, statues, and pictures, and tapestries.

In England the reversal of her sentence has not yet come.

She is still regarded generally, and may be, perhaps, for centuries, as a sorceress and a heretic.

But here also the day of acquittal and of the clearing of the good and holy memory will come.

And meantime, being where we believe she is, the Maid can well endure to wait.



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